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THE
SONS
OF
ALTRINGHAM,
A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY ALICIA TYNDAL PALMER,
AUTHOR OF
“THE HUSBAND AND THE LOVER,” AND
“THE DAUGHTERS OF ISENBERG.”

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THE SONS
OF
ALTRINGHAM.
—
ORLANDO ;

THE MATRIMONIAL CONTEST FOR SNAP-DRAGON LODGE.

— Contention, like a horse
Full of high feeding, madly hath broke loose,
And bears down all before him.

CHAP. I.

"Pray are you aware that I profess considerable skill in physiognomy, my young friend?" said Mr. Westerly to Orlando Altringham one morning, as that young man was standing opposite to him, for several minutes lost in thought. "Do you suspect that I

have dived into the subject of your meditation?"

Mr. Westerly was a distant relation of the Duchess of Castle-ossory, and had formed one of the noble pair's establishment nearly ever since their marriage, first in the capacity of under secretary to the Duke---afterwards in that of private theatrical assistant to her Grace.

He was a man fluent of speech, agreeable, of infinite anecdote, with all the easy manners of a man of the world, and all the pliancy of character necessary to make his way in it.

He secretly thought himself ill-used by fortune, in not having been born to a dukedom and ample domains; but was of opinion that next to the possessing these advantages in his own person, was the enjoying all the luxuries annexed to them, at the expense of another.

Influenced by this creed, Mr. Westerly had contrived to render himself so *useful* a man, in the family of Castle-ossory, that he had kept his stand in it till he was considered a sort of appendage there was no doing without ; and at the period Orlando accompanied his cousin, the Marquis of Cinquefoil, to Snap-dragon Lodge, (where the Duchess lay dangerously ill) he had long felt himself so completely *at home*, that he scrupled not to speak pretty freely of his patrons behind their backs, and often amused their graces guests when they were occasionally left to his entertaining powers, solely at the expense of their illustrious hosts !

It must be confessed, the matrimonial career of their graces had furnished him with abundant topics for his satiric vein ; and that he was rarely found to be so irresistibly comic

as when their domestic scenes formed the subject of his pleasantries.

" You need not look, my good fellow," pursued the laughing Mr. Westerly, " as frightened as if I were about to accuse you of the high crime of thinking Lady Xerena Elmeron less disagreeable than her silly sister; nor apprehend that I am about to threaten you with my intention of informing the vain Apolonia, that while she fancied, just now, she was captivating your admiration by her childish prattle and insipid smiles, your felonious eyes were stealing tender glances at---but come, my young stoic, quell your rising impatience, and recollect that I began my exordium by assuring you I was *not* going to accuse you of any thing of this mere *bardinage*; on the contrary, I saw by your looks, just then, that surprise, at his grace's setting off for town, while his duchess

is still imagined (though better) to be in considerable danger, was what engrossed your thoughts?"

"I really think I shall in future shun all professed physiognomists for your sake," replied Orlando, smiling, whose countenance had quickly resumed its usually benign calmness. "You are perfectly right in suspecting that the duke's quitting this place, at such a moment, has much---I had almost said---*shocked* me!"

"If you knew half as much of these, your noble relatives, as I do," replied Mr. Westerly, carelessly, "you would cease to be either shocked or surprised at any of their proceedings ; yet, it was what they call a love match, on the part of the duke, and a *title* one, as I guess, on that of my cousin ! When I had first the honor of being introduced as a witness of their spirited dialogues, I protest I believe Cinquefoil (for his

father was then alive) was still fond of her---jealous he certainly was; but that was before your remembrance; and at that time, to my knowledge, her husband was not the only man who thought her handsome!"

"I remember," observed Orlando, "when I was a mere boy, Lady Fitzosborne once brought me to the lodge with her; and that I saw her grace play several parts at her private theatre; I recollect thinking, at that time, that she was the finest woman in the world!"

"For *finest* (if you are resolved on discovering some characteristic for her grace of the superlative degree) write *most perverse*," replied Mr. Westerly, "for the one may allow of dispute---the other *can* admit of none; but, pray did you ever hear the history of this same lodge," pursued he, "to which her grace has aptly enough given the denomination of *Snap-dragon*?"

"Never," answered Orlando, "except that it is the rendezvous of her theatrical friends."

"I will tell you then," rejoined Mr. Westerly, raising himself from the indolent posture on the sofa in which he had been indulging; "quicken your attention, I pray you, for the frolic I am going to relate was very near preventing those pretty eyes of Lady Xerena from ever opening on the light! but you may now safely lay aside all that rising alarm; the danger has been for many years passed. Know then, that about the time the present Marquis of Cinquefoil was two years old, Lady Apolonia Elmeron one, and her grace beginning to give promise of a third young member of the house of Castle-ossory, her lord happened secretly to take a great fancy to a small hunting box (for this habitation was then no more) as just the thing for an

occasional place of entertainment to a few of his select associates, where his lady could not annoy them by her eternal theatricals.

"Let me, by way of elucidating as I go," pursued Mr. Westerly, "observe, that if there be truth in the doctrines of the philosopher of Samos,* the soul of the Marchioness must have passed at her birth from the body of a deceased comedian, or theatrical manager, into her's.

"The duke, on the grounds I have hinted, resolved on becoming the purchaser of this place, without acquainting the (then) Marchioness of his intention; but chance, or the genius who presides over female authority, thought proper to thwart him. A letter from the owner, stating the terms of sale to the Marquis, fell into his lady's hands, who, highly incensed

* Pythagorus.

that she had not been consulted before any step was taken, resolved on circumventing his designs. Her first proceeding was to go and view the premises, in the hope of discovering what had pleased him there.

"It is impossible to account," resumed Mr. Westerly, in a tone of irony, after a short pause, during which he had indulged in a hearty fit of laughter---"it is utterly impossible to account for the strange *sympathy* of taste which is to be found in some married couples! Nothing could have been less foreseen than the present coincidence between those of this noble pair! Her grace had no sooner examined the spot than she became convinced that the world did not offer another so completely corresponding with her own wishes. You will naturally conclude, therefore, that this discovery set every thing right, for that the lady

would scarce have endeavoured to prevent her lord's purchase of a place, which entirely met her own approbation; but you deceive yourself in drawing any such conclusions. This *happy* pair, you perceive, were agreed in the wish of rendering it *family* property; but there was a trifling difference in the manner they meant to dispose of it when become so. The Marquis, on the one hand, determined on *keeping* it, the snuggest thing in the world for himself and the very few choice friends he should from time to time bring down with him. The Marchioness, on the contrary, resolved on completely metamorphosing it. A new front was to be built, and fine wings added to it; one to form an *exquisite* miniature theatre, the other, furnish accommodations for the spectators, as well as actors, she proposed filling it with.---In short, their views

were as opposite as *discord* herself could have wished!

“Her ladyship’s first step on returning to town, was the driving in a hackney coach to the house of Mr. Holloway, the owner, in Bedford-row, and offering him a larger sum than that he had tendered it to the Marquis at. Mr. Holloway replied, that a young nobleman had taken a vast fancy to the bauble, and he scarce knew how to disappoint him; if, however, he should not be disposed to come up to the price she was ready to give, it was palpable enough that he did not set so high a value on the thing as herself, in which case his *conscience* would direct his giving her the preference.

“The Marquis was infinitely indignant on learning that *any* lady should presume to offer a price for a place he was himself desirous of buying; but find-

ing that his indignation did not silence the *conscience* of Mr. Holloway, he was at length obliged either to give up all hopes of completing the purchase, or agree on the advanced terms.

"Thus much of my story, by way of preliminary," observed Mr. Westerly, "that you may the better relish the scene which is to follow.

"The Marquis and myself were, one morning soon after, closetted in his library. On one table was spread out the breakfast apparatus; on another, writing implements, and your humble servant had just finished a letter of instructions to his lordship's solicitor, which he had been dictating in great wrath, when we were both surprised by the *mal-a-propos* entrance of the Marchioness. She appeared in high glee, and came forwards singing a favorite Spanish air, followed by her *suivante la babiole*.

The damsel was carrying a band-box of artificial flowers from which her ladyship (as it afterwards appeared) was about to chuse a bouquet for the evening."

"To what am I indebted for the unexpected honor, Madam, of this visit?" asked his lordship, coldly, instead of returning the sprightly compliments of the Marchioness.

"Purely to conjugal solicitude, my lord," was the reply.

"Pshaw!" ejaculated his sullen lordship.

"I feared," pursued her ladyship, in a tone of still greater softness, "I rather feared, my dear, on learning that you had risen three quarters of an hour earlier than usual, to-day, that something vexing had occurred to ruffle the placidity of your charming temper; so, like a tender sharer in your griefs, as well as joys, I left Major Coventry to sip his tea alone in my dressing-

room, and came hither to offer you my kind condolences, and take my chocolate with you."

"Now you must know that the Marquis had been for some time jealous of the Major's attentions to his lady, and was pleased to find she had quitted that universal favorite for himself."

"Westerly, will you place a chair at the breakfast-table for her ladyship?" said the now but half sullen Marquis, who, with a look that had something like suspicion in it, sat immovably fixed in his arm-chair.

"By no means, Mr. Westerly," remarked the Marchioness, playfully; "I came hither on a visit of courtesy to my lord, and from *his* hand alone will I accept the compliment of a seat."

"There then, Madam," returned his lordship, half ashamed of preserving the sulkiness he had received his

smiling lady with. "There then, Madam," and he pushed, rather than placed, a chair near the breakfast-table.

"Now, Mr. Westerly," observed her ladyship, looking round at me with a very gracious aspect "to convince you how entirely I am in charity with all mankind at this moment, least you should feel mortified at my rejection of your services, I will give you a little employment. Pray remove some of that *rubbish* from your table, that Babiole may dispose on it to the best of her slender capacity, the contents of Fiore's box. Thank you, Sir.--- Now, Babiole, let me see if you have any sort of taste in arrangement.--- Pooh! the rose next the myrtle, simpleton, they are flowers which never should be parted.---But to your lordship's source of grief."

"Nay, Madam," exclaimed the

Marquis, whose countenance was now inflamed with anger, "till Mademoiselle Babiole has completed her important task, and relieved us from the impertinent intrusion of her presence, we will, with your good leave——"

"Bless me!" interrupted her ladyship, with a look of surprise at the storm which seemed gathering, "what is the matter with his lordship?---He really then *has* some cause of sorrow which he wishes to impart to his sympathising consort.---Well, if that be the case, go child, Mr. Westerly will have the goodness to dispose of the rest for me, so go at once. The jas-mine, if you please, good Sir, on the other side the hyacinthe.---Now, my lord, I am entirely at your service."

"Confusion!" vociferated the Marquis, in a voice of thunder.

"The confusion, my dear, is entirely confined to your own brain, at

present," returned her ladyship, with a carelessness irresistibly provoking to an enraged husband, " and as I am not aware that you have any just cause of anger as yet towards any one but the Marquis of Cinquefoil, I suspect that your's is wholly levelled against that defenceless personage.--- But come, disburthen your mind, and confess, my lord, that you lost your money last night at play; or perhaps *threw* it away in some foolish *purchase* which was not worth half the sum you have given for it."

" There was a mixture of malice and exultation in her tone, as she pronounced this last sentence, which I will not attempt to describe to you. Her grace, I believe, is the only woman in the world, who could have given such an electrical effect to such simple words; they actually occasioned the *confusion* in the poor Marquis,

which he had been so unmeaningly apostrophizing just before.

The first use he made of his recovered senses, was to exclaim, looking at his lady with great sternness---

" I believe, from my very soul, Madam, that you are acquainted with Mrs. Lightfoot of Cavendish-square?"

" Admirable penetration!" replied the Marchioness, casting on him a look of infinite scorn.

" No prevarication Madam; are you, or are you *not* acquainted with Mrs. Lightfoot of Cavendish-square?"

" I am intimately acquainted with the lady, so denominating herself," returned the Marchioness, smiling bitterly on his lordship.

" By my soul I thought so!" roared the passionate husband.

" Wiserly," exclaimed her ladyship, in a tone of insolent sarcasm, " I trust you will not lose the only

opportunity that may occur to you, in your whole acquaintance with the Marquis of Cinquefoil, for congratulating him on thinking, *for once*, rightly! yet even this solitary instance bears the marks of his superficial mind! he has penetrated into no more than *half* the truth of the case before us; he well knows the lady himself."

"'Tis false, Madam," retorted the half frantic Marquis; "I am utterly unacquainted with the Jasebel."

"Nay, my dear, don't call names," interrupted her ladyship, with a frightful affectation of calmness; "because that looks so like having nothing to say in support of your cause."

"But enough of this," said Mr. Westerly, and more than enough, to give you a specimen of her grace's manner of bringing the duke to the state of *happy indifference*, which he has been long arrived at! It is, how-

ever, necessary for me to remark, that the (then) Marquis, had been too foolishly in love with my cousin, to permit his allowing the match to be broken off by a clause which her father had insisted on having inserted in her marriage settlement. This clause secured to his daughter, the sole and separate use of one third of her immense fortune, which was carefully committed to the management of trustees; with whose concurrence she possessed the power of disposing of it, in any way she pleased, they standing pledged to bar his grace from interfering with any of her dispositions of it. Availing herself of this power, the Marchioness had actually completed the purchase of the lodge at a still advanced price, to which, from the before mentioned circumstances, and in commemoration of them, she gave the name of *Snap-dragon*, and

had instructed Mr. Holloway to represent the party, who had thwarted his lord's views, to him, as a Mrs. Lightfoot of Cavendish-square, that she might have the pleasure of herself undeceiving him.

" Let me further observe, that the subject of the letter I had just written to the Marquis's solicitor, when his lady broke in on us, was to instruct him to file a bill in chancery, for the purpose of compelling Mr. Holloway to complete his original agreement with my lord ; and that this unforeseen discovery only made him more resolved than before, on spending ten times the value of the purchase money, in forcing it from his lady, if law or money could do it.

" The learning that such was the Marquis's intention, and the advice he boasted of having received from legal authority, soon after that Mr.

Holloway had certainly committed himself so palpably in some of his former letters, as must infallibly obtain a decision in the court of chancery in his favor, at length convinced her ladyship, that it was better for her to resort to stratagem, than to maintain a shew of defiance against the Marquis, who neither thought, talked, nor dreamt of any thing; but recovering this lodge of comic memory.

“ To turn these thoughts into a new channel, therefore, was the most likely plan to succeed, and with this view, she declared one day, soon after Major Coventry had set out for the continent, to join his regiment, that she was resolved on visiting it that very summer.

“ The half petrified Marquis, asked her ladyship, if she were mad; since he knew of no other excuse, which, with *propriety*, could be alleged for

undertaking such an expedition during her present situation.

" To this the lady carelessly answered, that his lordship was at liberty to frame what excuse he felt most satisfactory to himself; but that she was too indifferent, as to the opinion of others, to condescend to give any other reason, than her *own pleasure*, for going whithersoever she pleased, and under whatsoever circumstances she thought proper.

" A family consultation was in the end resorted to ; which terminated as I have remarked all family consultations do, in making matters worse. They wanted to get your grandmother Lady Fitzosborne Altringham to join them ; but she, like a sensible woman as she is, begged leave to decline interfering between man and wife. The old Duke and Duchess then took upon themselves to remonstrate with

their son's lady. They prognosticated her death, and the infant's to boot, among strangers, as the consequences of her persevering in this rash journey.

"The Marchioness, with edifying apathy, replied, 'that her life, being her own, she had a right to do what she liked with it; as for the infant, it must take its chance, and for the rest, she thanked heaven that she had, at her own disposal, what would ensure kinder treatment from strangers, than she seemed likely to receive, in future, from the family she had unhappily married into.'

"His grace grew alarmed at this last hint. He hastened to assure the Marquis, that if he did not wish to see the large legacy, which was at his lady's disposal, pass into the possession of foreigners, he must make up his mind, not to oppose her further, but seek an early opportunity of

reconciliation, and accompany her abroad.

" This family disturbance made a good deal of noise in the fashionable world ; it formed for several days the favorite topic of conversation, and it was thought a proper etiquette for all the marchioness's acquaintance, to call and endeavour to dissuade her from an excursion, which they now heartily wished her to undertake ; for the sake of settling the bets which had been offered and taken to a considerable amount on the result.

" You see, therefore, my young friend," said Mr. Westerly, smiling significantly ; " it was but fair that Lady Xerena, who had occasioned so much noise in the world, *before* she made her appearance in it, should be as completely raised above common mortals by her endowments, as you and I think she really is ; so don't set

about apologizing for having eyes and ears as well as others. But to my story—

“ Madam,” said the marquis, the next time he saw his lady, “ I wish I could feel satisfied that no mischief will result from this excursion of your’s.”

“ Oh ! fear it not,” replied her ladyship, carelessly; “ my new purchase of Snap-dragon Lodge, to your stud of hunters, I bring back the cub as fine and flourishing as either of the others.”

“ Done,” said his lordship, snatching up a pen, and committing the offered wager of his lady to paper. “ Here madam, sign this, and I will instantly stop all chancery proceedings.”

“ Your lordship will not find it very difficult to *overtake* them,” returned the lady, smiling; “ however, to put an end to these eternal jars, there is my signature; and now I leave it to

your justice to determine, if I do not value the brat's life."

The marquis becoming confident from this proof of confidence in his lady, deposited the record of their bet, properly signed by witnesses (of which I had the honor to be one) in the hands of a friend. Law proceedings were put an end to, and this precious couple now apparently the very best friends in the universe, embarked for the continent; over nearly half of which I verily believe she contrived to scamper before her *accouchement*. From the hour her ladyship set foot on it, till fairly tied by the leg, she seemed to have no other object in view, than that of hurrying from place to place. When at last the event did happen, she was fairly taken by surprise, (as might naturally have been expected) and had the felicity of finding herself confined three weeks at a very wretched

Posada, in the most miserable out of the way place in Spain. For the inconveniences she experienced, her ladyship had entirely to thank herself; as she would, in defiance of entreaties and common sense, push forwards with tired cattle one afternoon from a very decent resting place, in search of another, she was not destined to reach that night. Her coach was overturned midway, and the marchioness, bruised and frightened, was carried into the miserable habitation where Lady Xerena was born. There, without one comfort, or any regular assistance, her invincible obstinacy supported her through what would have killed ten other women, for the accommodations they had furnished themselves with, were not at hand when the accident happened. Take her ladyship's own ludicrous description of this place of her confinement, when once more able

to join us. "A chamber, open to every wind that blew---a bed, a foot too short---its furniture scarce covering the sides of the wretched pallet---a preposterously high chair, with a joint stool for a table---and a few live coals scattered on the floor, by way of fire. Her ladyship's *anti-room* crowded with the Gitano,* and his family travellers, drivers, muleteers, pigs, and asses; the bipeds of the party regaling themselves all day with an olio, compounded of rice, saffron, stock-fish, and long pepper, fried in train oil; of this fragrant cookery, a mess, ever and anon, sent into the sick lady, she never able to make them understand, that the distant effluvia was more than enough to subdue her hunger."

"My dear Georgina," said the marquis, after listening to the lady's reca-

* A great many Posada's in Spain are kept by gypsies.

pitulation of the inconveniences she had been exposed to, "I trust that what you have lately suffered, will teach you never again to act so unadvisedly as you did in getting yourself into such a situation!"

"Quite the contrary," replied his *amiable* consort; "I assure your lordship that I was much better pleased with the good creature our *Gitana* procured for me, and I have no doubt more faithfully served by her than I could have been by any of my own people; so never again tease me by regretting the mistake which prevented your getting back with Babyole and the rest of them sooner, or fancy that I was discomposed for an instant at trifling privations I experienced during my confinement. No, my lord, so far from having become a convert to your stay-at-home doctrines, by my late adventures, they have afforded me

so much amusement, that, as I have now pretty well ascertained the strength of my constitution, it is not improbable but I shall determine on having your next bantling a young Siberian, or Kamtskatcan, no matter which, provided it be as fine a creature, *and as much like your lordship* as my little Spanish girl !'

" You have the power to *cut and heal*, madam," replied the marquis, whose irritation at the first part of her ladyship's speech, was a good deal soothed by its conclusion ; " and may I die," he added, with honest warmth, " if I do not think your ladyship is at this moment looking handsomer than I ever saw you in my life ! "

" The lady left us soon after this conversation, and the marquis immediately gave orders that the nursery-woman should bring the baby to him.

" I was at the moment amusing my-

self at the other end of the room with an English newspaper ; but could not resist, from time to time, lifting my eyes, from curiosity, to observe his lordship's motions.' He stood a long while absurdly examining its unmeaning features as it lay in the woman's arms ; and before he sent her away he gave her a present, and a parading charge to be very careful of her little ladyship. This ceremony was, I remarked, from that morning daily repeated, (but always when the marchioness was absent) till at length the *papa* no longer contended with contemplating his brat in the nurse's arms, ventured one goodly day to take it in his own ! This was (he some time after gravely informed me) what he had never done to either of his other children ; and he really believed the fondling this little creature, as he from that time frequently did, was

what, *some how or other*, so unaccountably attached him to it.

"Till the marchioness discovered this increasing *penchant*, on the part of my lord, for her little *Spanish girl*, as she affectedly called the young one, she made a great parade about her; but with her confounded perverseness and incorrigible desire of thwarting the marquis, no sooner did she find out the liking he took to the little creature, than she began to treat her with a coldness and neglect.

"One day, after some pretty sharp altercation had taken place between them, about some trifle, which I have forgot, her ladyship said to me, as she cast a malicious glance at my lord, 'Do you know, Westerly, why I have christened my girl by the name of Xerena? It is because I was determined, by giving her a national one of the country she was born in, to

associate for ever in the memory of the marquis, *this girl* with his loss of Snap-dragon Lodge, and my *triumph* over him in possessing it!"

"Lady Xerena had just before given some symptoms of beginning to take notice of his lordship, which symptoms I presume were still fresh in his memory, for turning round to me the moment his lady had quitted the apartment, he said---

"By my life, Westerly, the marchioness does me injustice in believing I grudge her the lodge, for I would not lose that darling to be put into immediate possession of ten such places."

"This illustrious couple soon after was recalled to England by the death of the Duke of Castle-ossory, and the young duchess for a time recovered much of her good humour by the *eclat* with which she was enabled to rejoin

her circle of friends. Every body crowded about her grace to congratulate her on her safe return---to make a thousand inquiries about her adventures---and pour forth *their joy* on the health and beauty of the little Xerena, to see whom, so much curiosity was expressed, that for some time her little ladyship's nursery was as brilliantly attended as the drawing-room of her grace.

"But all such farces have an end, and so had this parade and nonsense, which the duchess soon grew weary of, and turned her attention to the lodge---this in due time was converted into what you see, under her direction.

"I really believe if thenceforth she had been content to enjoy her possession without continuing to *crow* over the duke in her confoundly provoking way, he would have forgot and forgiven all the vexation it had cost

him; but such conduct was inconsistent with the cross-grained nature of her grace. She so perseveringly teased, fretted, and galled him by her *exultation at having outwitted an hereditary senator of the British nation*, that, in the end, the very name of Snap-dragon Lodge became detestable to him.

“ When she had arrived at working the duke into this desirable state of prejudice against the place, her grace’s next step was to discover that *from its peculiarly healthy situation, it was the only fit residence for Ladies Apolonia and Xerena*. Here, therefore, they were immediately brought, and never suffered afterwards to be removed to either of their father’s seats, so that the poor duke was reduced to the alternative of giving up seeing his girls at all, or doing penance at this detested lodge the whole time he was

near them. His affection for the pretty Xerena, however, used at first to bring him down often; for the young urchin had by this time learnt to prattle to him, and to cry after him; but the pain he felt at leaving her, and the torment he had to sustain during his stay here, from her grace and her theatrical friends, who were for ever worrying him to take parts in their dramas, rendered his visits less and less frequent, till at length he has almost ceased to come at all; for, as if nature, in the creation of the duke and duchess, had resolved on making them in every respect perfect opposites, his detestation of all theatrical exhibition is as decided as is her predilection for them.

“ To say truth, (out of his family circle) there was but one part which poor Castle-ossory was then fitted to play; it was that of courtier; so, by

way of consoling himself for his domestic *verations* and *privations*, he fell to playing it most---*manfully* d d I say? But let that pass.

" This led him, some how or other, soon after, helter skelter into politics, where, in his *debut* of acting his new part, he got jostled and hustled, and a broken head into the bargain; but I have some reason to believe that he has since more perfectly studied the character which he had first accidentally *blundered* on, and has, consequently, now learnt to jostle and hustle, and break others heads in his turn; so that he keeps up the humour of the farce as well as the best of them!

" Meanwhile, the duchess and her band of theatrical friends (of which Major Coventry, soon after the completion of the lodge, again formed one) passed a great deal of their time here. Her daughters grew up---I can't say

they *both flourished*, for unfortunately for Lady Apolonia, her grace took it into her head that *she inherited all her own former lilies*, which she so highly prized, and was so much afraid of having *tarnished*, that she would scarce allow the air to blow on her. To this she owes that agreeable chalk and skimmed-milk mixture which her complexion so accurately exhibits; there is no earthly danger, you must allow, of any one's mistaking it for flesh and blood. Her mother pursued as happy a plan in her *no education*, and has ingeniously contrived so well to second nature in the formation of her maukish character and disposition, that I cannot so aptly compare them to any thing as luke-warm water gruel, without the least dash of salt in it.

“ I had almost forgot to tell you, that on one of my visits here with the duke, her grace discovered in me so

much *scenic talent*, that she in the end prevailed on me to lay aside the quill of secretaryship for the sock and buskin; in a word, I consented to enrol myself amongst her *company*.

"Now, while Major Coventry and your humble servant were, night after night, fighting as rival heroes in Richard and Richmond, or dying for her grace, from love, jealousy, or repentance, in Romeo and Othello, the little Lady Xerena was allowed to scamper about as wild as her playfellows, the animals, without check or care. In the glowing mottle of her skin, the blooming freshness of her cheek, and her unformed, but Hebe features, the duchess (being unable to trace any resemblance to herself) gave up the task, as hopeless, of ever making her a *beauty*; so, luckily, she left her to the guidance of our *common parent*, who, you must confess, had

most bountifully endowed her. Never did she give a sweeter specimen of what she *can* do, unassisted by art, than in this lovely girl!---but, by St. George, I am running into something like poetry!---I need not, however, tell you that I have used no *fiction* in it.---Well, *courage*.---I have now but one more figure to bring forward on my canvass, when I shall have set before you a faithful family-picture of the present representatives of the noble house of Castle-ossory!

“ I have told you that her grace was systematic in having every thing her own way. Now, be it known, that she was equally decided in committing to Cinquefoil, from his cradle, a free agency not less unlimited. I will not tell you she placed him under a private governor, because that would be misrepresenting the thing; a person, improperly so denominated, on the con-

trary, resigned up *his* liberty for many years to the absolute dominion of this hopeful sprig of nobility. Mr. Jasper Woodcock was a man, possessing some sprinkling of erudition, well meaning, and inoffensive. His temptation for undertaking this heavy slavery, was a promise of a decent annuity after the boy wanted his services no longer, which, by the bye, poor fellow, he never lived to enjoy. On taking charge of the marquis, he received from her grace but two injunctions, they, however, were positive. The boy was never to be crossed, and to be prevented (as he valued his own life) from coming to any personal harm. Poor Jasper found the obeying these contradictory commands a difficult part; but chance so good humouredly seconded him in the second, that, without his ever having presumed to disobey the first, Cinquefoil attained

the age of seventeen, with sound limbs and an unbroken pate.

" By this time our young hero had exhausted every pleasure both in town and country, so that life has been ever since an insupportable burthen to him. Jasper was relieved by death from his last year's servitude, and never obtained his promised reward for a life of care. His health gradually declined, poor man, under the constant anxiety he endured, least the lad should come to harm ; and in that he has often, with tears in his eyes, declared to me he feared it would end.

" There is, however, nothing vicious, nothing bad, in the marquis, (pursued Mr. Westerly, after a short pause) and he was very sorry for Jasper when he was fairly gone. He has, however, found consolation for his loss since, in the invaluable treasure he thinks he possesses in that incom-

parable puppy, Monsieur Fribourg, who has been of late years his gentleman---his confidant---his adviser---the depository of his griefs---his instigator to rebellion against the duke---in short, his absolute governor! We may, therefore, say of Monsieur Fribourg, that he is a man of great power with the marquis. ‘ For what is power, but the nice conduct of another’s weakness ! ’ ”

A domestic at this moment entering to acquaint Mr. Westerly that the horses he had ordered, were in readiness for a short journey he was about to take, on business, (with which the duke, before setting out, had commissioned him) that gentleman arose, carelessly wished Orlando good morning, quitted the room, and springing gaily on his steed, soon lost sight of Snap-dragon Lodge.

CHAP. II.

It is not easy to depict the sensations with which the amiable Orlando Altringham had listened to the rapid, yet animated sketch, Mr. Westerly had just given him of the family, in the midst of which, he had for some days found himself, to which he was nearly allied by the ties of blood. A new world seemed opened to him by the discovery, that such beings as most of those, whom that gentleman had described---that such a being as that gentleman had proved himself to be, existed.

Brought up in the bosom of a family of harmony, in the mansion of Lady Fitzosborne, accustomed to see ration-

ality, self control, and an unaffected desire of rendering others happy, the principles on which those around him acted---embued himself by nature, with no common share of the milk of human kindness, Orlando shuddered at the discovery, that the world was in part peopled with a race totally distinct from those with whom he had dwelt; claiming no affinity of character to those with whom he could alone wish to associate.

Full of enthusiasm and romance, with a mind cultivated and enriched by a genuine love of poetry, and a heart refined and softened by a passionate taste for music, his life had hitherto been one of peace, of tranquil pleasure, and of future hope, loving and beloved, by all around him.

In the occasional intercourse he had had with the family of Castle-ossory, the duke had struck him as cold, and

somewhat repulsive in his manners ; but with no other standard to judge the hearts of others, than his own, Orlando had attributed this seeming uncongeniality to the too constant occupation of his grace's mind, with concerns of such a magnitude, as to preclude his relaxing it, with the pleasures of domestic life.

Of the duchess, he had seen little ; but that little had left a deep impression of admiration and gratitude on his youthful memory. It was under her auspices that he had been first awakened to the pleasures of dramatic representation. In her he had first wept the untimely fate of Juliet, had been wrung with tender sympathy of her sorrows, by the wild melody of poor Ophelia. Yes ! it was here, the characters of Shakespear had for him first started into life. Then had the duchess been the presiding star, which

ruled the magic scene---then had all been gay and brilliant around her. Could he suspect that this place of joy and festivity---this paradise, as he then thought, as he *still* thought it, had been acquired by means so disgraceful to the owner; had laid the foundation for scenes so utterly destructive of conjugal affection.

Mr. Westerly too! that man who had so long resided beneath their roof---who had been admitted to their privacy as a friend; even he had taken a malicious pleasure in detailing scenes, which the refined nature of Orlando shuddered to remember, had been acted by beings of the same species as himself. What a specimen of that world which was opening upon him---what a humiliating lesson of the degradation to which humanity may descend---what an illustration of a sentiment he had once read with indignation.

*"Dieu me garde de mes amis!
quant à mes ennemis, je m'en charge."*

Yet Orlando believed he had discovered in this very family, a being of a still higher order than any he had before known. He believed he had discovered her in the younger daughter of that house.

The morning following the rapid journey in which he had accompanied the marquis to the lodge, rising at early morning, he had with his inseparable companions, in his pocket, his flute and a book, crossed the velvet lawn, which, bordering the edifice, sometimes pressed the foot or crept up the slopes of the surrounding hills; at others, wound along the glades into the thickest of the plantations, tracing a beautiful outline to this picturesque scene.

The duchess had, by new purchases, as greatly enlarged the original dimen-

sions of the grounds, as she at first increased the size of the mansion, and they had been laid out by the hand of taste.

The morning was delicious---all was mild ---all placid---all serene without, as were the temper and harmonious feelings of the amiable Orlando, who had learnt, on passing her grace's door, that she was pronounced better.

It was, therefore, with a lighter step, from reflecting on the pleasure to which this intelligence would awaken the late harassed and distressed marquis, that he bounded forward through a romantic pathway, running along the brink of a deep glen, which was peopled by a numerous assemblage of feathered songsters; and while his bosom glowed with "adoration pure" towards their great Creator, he murmured, with devout enthusiasm.---

"Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
With charms of earliest birds; pleasant the sun,
When first on this delightful land he spreads
His orient beams, on herb tree, fruit, and flower,
Glist'ning with dew."

As he pronounced these words, he paused to look around and inhale with greater ease, the balsamic air which fanned him.

It was a smiling prospect he there beheld, but on proceeding further, the scene beneath grew wilder, and assumed a duskier hue; at length, he discerned at the bottom of the glen, but nearly lost in deep shadow, a rude bench, placed in the midst of several little currents, which stole quietly amongst large loose stones and decayed stumps of trees.

The landscape offered a sombre contrast to that he had so lately quitted; and with the inconstancy of youth, he forsook the flowery path in which he

had been wandering, to descend a rough hollow which wound down the side of the steep hill ; for though now dry, it had been worn there during the stormy months, by an impetuous water course.

As he drew nearer the object which had first attracted him, the place offered to his observation, the aspect of a deeper hollow and darker gloom. There the joyous chaunt of birds were no longer heard---the cheering sun beams played not---dark stains marked the downward course of many a former waterfall, formed by the storms of winter, which at that season swelled the now scarcely creeping rivulet into a brawling current, while an air of greater desolation was given to this *vale of silence*, from the roots of many of the finest trees having been robbed of their soil, by the tempestuous descent of those torrents, and left bare

and exposed to view. The branches of others sinking with their own weight, appeared ready to break from the parent trunk, and at a little distance from the stone bench, on which Orlando had seated himself, a fine moss covered oak, loosened from its hold, lay prostrate along the water course.

There was in this sombre valley, a damp chilliness, which corresponded with the dreary aspect it offered to the view; and those buoyant spirits of the youth, which had a few minutes before been exhilarated to rapture by the bright blaze of day, now strongly partook of the contrast the scene around presented.

Orlando yielding to the impulse which prompted him instantly to scale the steep path by which he had descended, and regain the smiling hill, was quitting the rude seat whereon he

had a moment rested, when his eye accidentally caught an inscription, which was engraven on the stone at his feet. He stooped down and read---

“ Quoi Phanias ! les couleurs de ton ame, ne seroient elle que le reflet des objets qui t’environnent ?”

“ Thanks, silent monitor,” said Orlando, (on whose cheek the warm blush glowed at discovering how very a creature of imagination he had, at that moment proved himself.) “ Thanks silent monitor! you offer not your instructions to one obstinate in error. It is indeed reproachful to a being, endowed with reason, to resign its powers to the influence of the air; or surrounding scenery, when, by ‘ resolutely exciting his faculties,’ he may rise superior to such weakness.”

“ As he said this, drawing from his pocket his flute, he reseated himself on the bench he had lately quitted,

and breathed on that little instrument, a melody, sweet, yet wildly characteristic of the effect produced on his feelings by the surrounding aspect of nature.

" It was an air, to which he had, when a boy, set these words of the bard of Erin. ' Silence dwells in the vales, where each, with its own dark rills, is winding between the trees.'

Smiling at the unintentional but appropriate choice he had made, and resolved on trying if he could not master a susceptibility, which the re-prover of Phanias deemed a fit subject for ridicule, he now pursued his walk along a rough pathway, bordering the outward streamlet, which from its having been always covered during the winter, by the swollen water, still retained the black tinge of damp.

The valley as he proceeded became more narrow, dim, and chill; till at

length, his further progress seemed forbidden by a rock, beneath whose base the sleepy current appeared gently to sink to rest.

Orlando stood for some minutes contemplating in musing mood its sudden disappearance, and the unexpected barrier offered to his passage; till in lifting his eyes to survey the height of the overhanging impediment, he remarked an archway to the left (half hid by spreading birch) which presented an entrance to some dark recess within. He approached it, and perceived engraven on the rock above, these words---

Wanderer! if taste congenial with these scenes have drawn thee hither, tempt not the farther gloom; but, if by the exertion of reason, thou hast overcome a repugnance to traverse thus far, the vale of silence, enter and complete thy conquest over a weakness,

which was but the effect of imagination operating on luxury.

The footsteps of Orlando had at first recoiled from entering the murky cave before him, so uninviting was the appearance its interior, (as far as the eye could penetrate) offered; but the last words of the inscription struck on his senses as so completely addressed to himself, that he resolved on exploring the sombre recess; and pushing aside the wild plants, which choaked up the mouth, he plunged into the dim obscurity.

The first few steps seemed to carry him into utter darkness, while the loud rushing of an impetuous stream, now heard near him, with deafening roar, dashing over large stones and fragments of fallen rock, still heightened the dreariness of the place.

Orlando paused to ascertain on which side the noisy waters descended;

and while he paused a strong gleam of light breaking athwart the gloom, directed his steps towards the spot through which the sun beams penetrated.

As he advanced the light grew stronger, and conducted him towards a second arch, which, as he approached it, he found opened on a spot forming the most perfect and enchanting contrast to the scene he had just quitted.

Over the opening, was cut through the rock, so as to form transparent letters, these words---

Pass pensive passenger, and rejoice in joyous nature.

Orlando obeyed, and on issuing from the gloomy recess, beheld a spectacle lovely as youth, exhilarating as hope. Yet it was quite a *home* prospect, though of an *even temper*, closely bounded by a semi-circular border of stately trees, all fresh, vigorous, and

so full of leaf, that not a stem or branch was visible. Large masses of foliage, described an undulating line, which shut out all distant objects; while the ground gently waving over easy swells and little dips, just varied, without breaking the surface, by its pleasing undulations.

Forgetful of Phanias and his monitor, Orlando now with bounding step and lightened heart, entered this alluring ~~temple~~¹⁰⁰; from time to time slackening his pace, to behold the grass and the gossamer which entwined it glittering with dew; then pausing to examine some birds of rare plumage, which seemed held in willing bondage, beneath frame works of netting, placed here and there in this enclosure.

Thus was passed the first half hour by Orlando of quitting the *silent valley*. How much longer he might have

found amusement in gratifying this species of curiosity, was not ascertained; since, as he proceeded, an object of a very different nature from those he had been heretofore contemplating, seized on his attention, and quickly absorbed his every faculty.

Under a spreading willow, (which bathed many of its flexible branches in a piece of water on whose grassy edge it grew) apparently occupied in the perusal of a book which rested on her lap, sat a lady, who, to the poetic fancy of the wanderer, seemed the presiding enchantress of this charming scene!

One elbow of this fair creature resting on a knot of the willow's trunk, supported with its hand her head; the other, carelessly thrown across the book, resisted the wanton tricks of Zephyrus, who, by endeavouring to play amidst its leaves, appeared maliciously

intent on hindering her from communing with its author.

Orlando gazed---and wondered---and admired!---Minutes passed, but no movement from this “delightful vision” bore testimony that it was of mortal mould!

At length, with timid steps and looks irresolute, he nearer drew. The nymph remained still motionless.

He now had actually reached the tree, and disparting its branches, timidly contemplated the sleeping lady. Yes! she slept, “with tresses discomposed, and glowing cheek;” yet, “he beheld beauty, which, whether waking or asleep, shot forth peculiar graces.”

A robe of simple guise was carelessly wrapped about her, and might have suggested to one who had remarked ought but herself, that she was of humble station.

While Orlando was, with new-born

pleasure, regarding the hand which rested on the open book, a sudden rustling of the leaves from a bough above, startled without awaking the lovely sleeper. Not less startled was the attentive youth, who, alarmed at the danger he had run of being detected in the act of gazing on the fair unknown, gently replaced the separated branches, and proceeded on his walk, while his head and fancy were filled with the object he had quitted.

By a narrow but pleasant path, which led from this enclosure to the lawn, he not long after regained the lodge, and joined those members of the family of Castle-ossory, who were already assembled at the breakfast table.

“Where is your sister?” asked the duke of Lady Apolonia, who a few minutes after entered the apartment.

“She sat up last night with mamma,” replied her ladyship; “and I believe,

on leaving her chamber this morning early, repaired to bed, as I have not seen her to-day."

His grace then introduced his elder daughter to Orlando, who had not arrived the preceding evening till the young ladies had quitted the supper-room.

The repast had been for some time ended, when Mr. Westerly, who was indolently looking out of one of the windows, exclaimed, "Here comes Lady Xerena, fresh and blooming as Aurora! --- who would suspect that she had passed last night in vigils, by the couch of sickness?"

"Xerena, my love," said the duke, throwing up the sash towards which his daughter was with elastic steps approaching, " whence come you? --- your sister fancied you were sleeping."

"Did she?" replied a voice, whose pleasing tones caused Orlando instantly to turn towards the speaker,

"she has not been very much mistaken in her guess."

A smile played round her ruby lips as she spoke, and Orlando recognized, with a surprise he could not conceal, in the younger daughter of the house of Castle-Ossory, the sleeping lady, by whom his thoughts had been, from the time of quitting her, entirely engrossed.

While she advanced, he gazed on this beautiful young creature with increasing admiration, as life and motion gave to her person a new character of attractions;

"And ne'er did Grecian chisel trace,
A nymph, a naiad, or a grace,
Of finer form, or lovelier face!"

"What though the sun with ardent frown
Had slightly tinged her cheek with brown,
The "healthful walk," which "fleet" and light
Had dyed her glowing hue so bright,
Served too, in hastier swell to show
Short glimpses of a breast of snow."

“What though no rule of courtly grace
To measured mood had trained her pace,
A foot more light, a step more true,
Ne'er from the heath-flower dashed the dew.
E'en the slight hare-bell raised its head
Elastic from her hairy tread,”

Lady Xerena Elmeron was indeed a favored child of nature, left entirely to herself by her mother, who from the period of discovering the duke's partiality towards her, had seemed, out of mere opposition, to lavish all her cares and caresses on her elder daughter; it was happy for her that “the hand which made her fair had made her good.”

Though tenderly beloved by his grace, for whom she entertained the most grateful and filial regard, Lady Xerena was, by the arbitrary will of the duchess, in a manner cut off from all personal intercourse with him, and thereby deprived of those instances of

paternal affection for which her young heart languished.

Thus while her perverse mother resorted to every device she could imagine for preserving the beauty, embellishing with accomplishments, and drilling into a mere piece of mechanism her spoilt Apolonia, she was left to find what consolation she could for her total want of maternal solicitude in the progress of her education.

There are minds of such a class that even the nipping frost of neglect cannot destroy the gem of excellence implanted in them---minds, whose native beauties *will* develope themselves, though surrounded by the chilling atmosphere of envy or unkindness ! Of such a class was that of Lady Xerena Elmeron.

Thrown on her own resources at a very early age, she was led to soothe her too lively sense of the singular

forlornness of her situation, by the spontaneous exercise and improvement of those faculties with which nature had gifted her.

It has been justly observed, that knowledge, like fire, must first be kindled by some external agent; but which, impatient to increase, will afterwards propagate itself. In the young mind of Lady Xerena the first spark was early lighted, and from the peculiarity of her destiny, soon grew into a steady and unextinguishable flame.

From the chilling slights of that mother, by whom her affectionate young heart had been severely wounded, she found consolation, not in the dissipation of mind which is to be obtained by a commerce with the world, but in the beauties of nature---in the cultivation of the sister arts---and by communing with those silent unobtrusive friends, who alike open

the stores of their instructive wisdom to all who seek their aid. In these, Lady Xerena found solace---in these she discovered never failing sources of delight---mines capable of furnishing inexhaustible funds of mental treasure!

“ This *books* can do ; nor this alone ; they give New view of life, and teach us how to live. Their aid they yield to all : they never shun The man of sorrow, nor the wretch undone : Unlike the hard, the selfish and the proud, They fly not sullen from the suppliant crowd.

* * * * *

Blest be the gracious power who taught mankind To stamp a lasting image of the mind.”

Yet it was by *neglect* alone that the quick feelings of Lady Xerena had ever been wounded by her grace ; for if her infant years had not been fostered by a mother’s watchful care, she had alike escaped the injury of over-indulgence, and the still more baleful effects on the youthful character of severity.

On the part of the duchess, as she was decidedly of opinion that air and exercise destroyed all feminine delicacy, she rather encouraged than sought to control the inclination of her younger daughter to almost live in the open air, on the principle of preventing the possibility of her complexion ever bearing a comparison with that of her *snow-drop*, as she often with pride and exultation called her sister. It was to promote this view, that when she from time to time added some new purchase to her domain of the lodge, (as to the decoration of which she was herself perfectly indifferent) that Lady Xerena, as she grew older, had the gratification of being commissioned to lay it out as her own taste dictated.

Her amiable young heart rejoiced by the belief that these indulgences were proofs of growing regard from her

mother, flattered herself that by her zeal in embellishing this favorite spot, she was pursuing the most certain road to her heart.

In her dispositions on these occasions the duchess always affected to discover an originality of design, peculiarly suited to the place, while Lady Xerena, made happy by her approbation, and becoming daily more and more enamoured of her innocent recreations, found time pass lightly away in employments, in which duty and inclination were so happily combined, while her taste and fancy were constantly assisted and refined by her ardent study of the most admired poets.

The high relish for pastoral beauties, which might be said to have been almost innate in Lady Xerena, directed her in decorating the new grounds added to the lodge, rather to embellish than seek to *change* the face of nature.

The *vale of silence* she had found very nearly what it at present was, having merely here and there heightened the original gloom of its deep dell by the appropriate introduction of sombre objects, and rendering other parts still more obscure. The inscription addressed to Phanias, was placed at the foot of the rude stone bench by her direction, for the purpose of piquing those wanderers who might otherwise have been deterred from further exploring its uninviting scenes into pursuing their way to the mouth of the cavern.

The lines had been engraven on the rock above its aperture by her instruction, with a view to allure them to enter its gloomy recess ; that by means of the second arch-way, which she had herself caused to be cut through it, the passenger might be cheated into enjoying, with all the zest complete

contrast could offer, the lovely scene
her smiling *Tempé* presented.

As the faculties and taste of Lady Xerena thus happily developed themselves, her affectionate young heart found proofs of kindness in her grace's indulging her in the free enjoyment of those pure sources of pleasure from whence she had now learnt to draw such intellectual delight.

Her voice was one of peculiarly sweet, clear, penetrating tones, and her song received from the enthusiasm of her character, and her eloquent articulation, all the refined charms with which poetry can enrich music.

Without ever having experienced any regular instruction in the sister arts, Lady Xerena had, occasionally, through her own faithful diligence, benefitted by those masters, who had from time to time come down to Snapdragon Lodge, for the purpose of assist-

ing at the entertainments of her grace. The advantages of which she at these times eagerly availed herself improved the graceful facility of her style, without destroying its originality.

No one possessing the least sensibility could have listened to or contemplated this attractive girl, without strong emotions of pleasure and interest.

The lively impression which a very transient acquaintance with Lady Xerena had produced on a young nobleman, whom the duchess had carried down with her to the lodge, under the idea that he would be a very eligible match for Lady Apolonia, had determined her grace on no account to *bring out* her younger daughter (who had not been presented at the time her sister was) till she had secured that daughter a suitable establishment.

Lord Astenhall possessed every qualification which the duchess thought

desirable for the future husband of her spoilt favorite, whom she had wrought to listen with much complacency to her instructions on the line of conduct most likely to win him. His lordship's passionate taste for private theatricals being scarcely inferior to that of her grace, he had often, during his visits to her, expressed the uncommon pleasure he always enjoyed in her society; yet he had hitherto viewed with vexatious indifference the *lilies* of the fair Apolonia, and her insipid efforts to attract him, while he had been struck with secret admiration of the glowing beauties---the intelligence of eye---the graceful symmetry ---and the numerous other claims to preference, of her younger sister.

The first time that these young ladies had ever been brought into comparison by his lordship, was during his last visit at the lodge. The play of the

Merchant of Venice had been produced in great style, and Lady Apolonia played the part of Jessica to his Lorenzo.

On this occasion the duchess's guests had complimented her on outdoing even herself in Portia; and, some new company happening to arrive at the mansion just in time to witness the last scene, they had expressed so lively a desire to see her grace perform the whole character, that she determined on repeating the piece a few nights after.

It unfortunately happened, however, that Lady Apolonia had caught so violent a cold at the last representation, as to have entirely lost her voice; and no other person at the lodge choosing to undertake her part, the duchess thought that of two evils the lesser would be to make Lady Xerena read the character, if she could not study it

in time, rather than to give up the gratification of her own display. Her ladyship, in consequence, received positive injunctions from her mother to make the best of the matter she was able on so short a notice.

Unconscious of her own extraordinary powers, and shrinking from this first exhibition of herself as a candidate for theatrical praise, Lady Xerena listened with dismay to a command, obedience to which she could not elude.

She set herself, therefore, though most reluctantly, to study the personification of a character, which, to her unadulterated and delicate mind, appeared to be not without much criminality.

The father of Jessica, it was true, was an avaricious, revengeful, unrelenting Jew; still he was her father! was it then for his child to give the stroke of retribution? Could it excuse her plundering as well as her abandonment of him?

It was in vain Mr. Westerly assured her ladyship that Jessica was universally esteemed to be a very amiable and interesting character; that he had never in his life heard the actions which had so greatly revolted her spoken of with reprobation. Lady Xerena could not be persuaded to think with greater indulgence of her conduct, particularly the robbing her father of the ring, "given him by Leah when a bachelor."

Her ladyship proceeded to observe, that although the moral Shakespear appeared to have lost sight, in his detestation of Shylock, of his daughter's offence, she could no more overlook it in considering the character of Jessica, than she could forget the many inimitable passages by which the dramatist had marked his abhorrence of the crime of filial ingratitude.

" Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to't?"

Repeated Lady Xerena, as a striking instance in point.

" You should consider," replied Mr. Westerly, carelessly, " that those words are put into the mouth of a disappointed, peevish, old man, and are, to say the truth, apt enough, as used by him, in speaking of those jades, his daughters; but I am convinced Shakespear never meant to mark with reprobation so natural a thing as a girl eloping with her lover."

" Yet," returned Lady Xerena, " what a lesson does he give to girls in the effect produced on Othello by Iago's artful suggestion, when, with the view of undermining the Moor's confidence in Desdemona, he observes, ' She did deceive her father, marrying you.' The unhappy husband, shuddering at this recollection, which

breaks on him as a confirmation of his doubts, exclaims, ‘ And so she did.’

The approach of company at the moment Lady Xerena had uttered this, made her take an abrupt leave of her companion, for the purpose of obeying her mother’s commands ; and as she quitted the room at one door, Lord Astenhall entered it at the other.

Mr. Westerly, in a tone of ridicule, immediately related to his lordship the unaccountable and unreasonable prejudice which Lady Xerena had taken against the character assigned to her ; which nonsense, he said, no doubt originated in her having been allowed by her mother the liberty of indulging in notions equally romantic and absurd.

His lordship inquired eagerly if he imagined the young lady’s dislike of the part of Jessica would prevent her undertaking it.

“ By no means,” the gentleman re-

plied : "the duchess had already signified her pleasure on that point, and filial obedience was one of those matters which Lady Xerena made a point of conscience."

The further observations of Mr. Westerly on her ladyship---her mode of self-education, which he described in his characteristic way---with the singular manner in which he represented her as usually passing her time, tended to rouse considerable curiosity in his lordship, who had scarcely yet seen her ; and from that hour he looked forward with increasing impatience to the evening of the exhibition.

It came---and rendered Lord Astenhall fully sensible of Lady Xerena's uncommon attractions. Her interesting, expressive, and beautiful countenance---her charming voice---the symmetry of her form---the native grace of her every movement---each had its

share in the powerful impression received by his lordship that night, who left her grace's private theatre, for the first time in his life, seriously in love.

It was immediately after this memorable performance that the duchess had been seized with the dangerous illness which had carried the duke, the Marquis of Cinquefoil, and Orlando, to the lodge, a few days after the dispersion of the numerous guests that had before filled it, amongst the last lingerers of whom was Lord Astenhall.

During the progress of her grace's indisposition, she had an opportunity of estimating the value of the excellent constitution possessed by Lady Xerena; for, while her sister was disabled by the delicacy of her's from affording the least assistance to her sick parent, she seemed equally insensible of the fatigue of watching over her during the night, and attending her by day.

Her ladyship, on quitting the supper room the evening of Orlando's arrival at the lodge, had gone immediately to her grace's chamber, with whom she sat up; and early on the following morning (when relieved by one of the attendants who took her place) she had had the pleasure of leaving her mother in a restoring sleep.

Cheered by this favorable symptom, Lady Xerena, with a lightened heart, was directing her steps towards her own room, in the intention of taking a few hours repose, when, in passing on her way thither, an open window, the balmy freshness of the cool breeze felt so reviving, that she changed her design of courting refreshment in slumber into that of seeking it in a walk.

It was now some days since her ladyship had enjoyed the luxury of breathing in the open air, and so sensible did she become of its restorative

powers, that, before reaching her favorite Tempè, she had lost all sense of want of sleep. After having passed some time in ascertaining that her birds had not been neglected since last she saw them, Lady Xerena sat down to rest herself beneath a willow, which had been planted with her own hands, when a child, near the border of the water which ornamented this spot. At the foot of this tree she perceived a volume which she had unconsciously left there on a former walk, and, opening it, was amusing herself with its perusal, when long banished slumber stole imperceptibly over her, and had fast locked up her faculties, at the period Orlando explored his way from the sombre *vale of silence*, and was surprised by the unexpected sight of a sleeping lady.

Orlando Altringham----concealed from the observation of Lady Xerena,

as she now entered the breakfast room by the window recess in which he stood---with mute attention continued to gaze on her every graceful movement, as, lightly crossing the saloon, she hastened with a look of animated pleasure to the impatient duke, who had extended his arms to receive her. He marked the air of grateful sensibility with which she received her father's caresses; the still richer glow which returned to dye the cheek that had for a moment retained the imprint of a paternal kiss; the tender interest with which she soon after detailed to his grace, in a voice more touching than any he had ever heard, the symptoms of amendment that had preceded her mother's sinking into the refreshing slumber in which she had left her; and, finally, the little history of her morning walk, with the surprise to which she had awakened, on disco-

vering that sleep had unwarily overtaken her beneath her favorite willow.

If Orlando had been at first sight deeply penetrated with admiration of this engaging creature, how greatly must that admiration have been increased by all he now heard and contemplated! With what additional emotion to that she had originally excited, did he from that hour recal the interest with which he first beheld her---now, that that remembrance was become associated with the amiable cause of the fatigue which had laid her open to the unsuspected attack of sleep!

The hand of Lady Xerena still rested on the shoulder of that arm of the duke which had encircled her during her little narrative, when, turning abruptly towards Mr. Westerly, he asked that gentleman if he still discovered in her ladyship the same re-

markable likeness to himself which had so much struck them all, when she was an infant.

"In my opinion," replied that gentleman, whose well disciplined muscles betrayed no symptom of the irony which lurked beneath his words ; "in my opinion, Lady Xerena never more entirely resembled your grace, than at the present moment."

The eye of Orlando for an instant wandered from the open countenance of her ladyship, now illumined by a charming smile, to the sallow, contracted, and unintelligent visage of the duke. A glance was sufficient to convince him, that however correct the resemblance of feature may be thought by others, he could not admit of likeness where the physiognomy which received its characteristic expression from the mind was so entirely dissimilar.

The party had been soon after dispersed by the intimation that the duchess was awakened; and for the three following days, Orlando had few opportunities of enjoying the society of Lady Xerena, whose time was almost entirely passed in her mother's room. All, however, which he did see of her tended to strengthen the impression he had before received.

The night previous to the duke setting off for town, the duchess had passed in great restlessness, in consequence of her having on the preceding day been agitated by a conversation that took place between her and his grace. The apprehensions which her physicians had entertained of a relapse did not, however, induce the duke to change his intention of reaching London before the meeting of parliament; and it was the surprise expressed by the ingenuous counte-

nance of Orlando, at seeing him quit his family at such a moment, that had called forth from Mr. Westerly those sarcastic details of the former matrimonial contest for Snap-dragon Lodge, by which this noble pair had, in their younger days, so singularly distinguished themselves.

CHAP. III.

THE fears which had been entertained respecting the precarious state of the Duchess of Castle-ossory's health, on the departure of her lord, proved groundless : she continued from that period, though slowly, to recover from the effects of her first violent attack ; and, on regaining sufficient strength to bear being carried to her dressing room, began to feel very impatient to resume those amusements in which she had spent so many years of her life.

Her capability of exertion, nevertheless, by no means kept pace with her wishes, and she found herself compelled to have recourse, by way of substitute, to the setting her daughters,

Mr. Westerly, and Orlando, alternately to read to her some favorite scenes, while she sought recreation, from time to time, in censuring or commending their efforts, as her nice critical judgment in dramatic effect dictated.

There was in the countenance, the figure, the gestures, the fine modulations of voice, and a certain enthusiasm with which every thing approaching poetry inspired him, that which singularly pleased her grace in Orlando Altringham; and it occurred to her, one sleepless night, that he was eminently qualified to act the part of Romeo.

The conceiving this idea, and the resolving that he should act it at her theatre on the re-assembling of her friends, were points inseparable with the duchess; and the youth was, on the following morning, (little suspecting the matter she wanted to propose

to him) summoned to her grace's dressing room.

It so happened that the messenger found him but lately returned from a walk, the most delightful he had ever taken; for never till then had he enjoyed one with a companion whose taste, whose mind, whose heart, were so perfectly congenial with his own.

Orlando had that day, for the first time since the memorable morning after his arrival, encountered Lady Xerena Elmeron in one of her early excursions; not as he had then beheld her, quiescent, lost to consciousness, "looking tranquility," but animated and agile as one of the Orcades. By her he had been conducted, with winning courtesy, through yet unexplored paths to the sombre *vale of silence*, which he dared not confess he had once before traversed, lest his treacherous features might betray a secret

fondly treasured in his romantic bosom ; the temerity with which he had contemplated the then sleeping lady.

As they pursued their walk, Lady Xerena, with engaging frankness, pointed out to her companion where any actual change had been effected, under her direction, in the surrounding scenery ; where she had only added some poetic or classical embellishments ; explaining her object in having caused the occasional inscriptions to be engraven, which here and there amused the idle wanderer, or offered food for meditation to the reflecting one.

To all this Orlando listened with a pleasure by no means inferior to that with which the lovely speaker, unconscious that she was unfolding to him a mind equally distinguished by taste and high cultivation, dilated on a subject rendered peculiarly interesting

to herself, from the belief that it formed the strongest tie she possessed on the regard of her careless and neglecting mother.

The glow of admiration that had been first kindled in Orlando's bosom by the external attractions of Lady Xerena, assumed a more tender and lasting character from the moment he discovered the sympathetic ardour with which her life had been passed in those pursuits he most loved. Never had the favorite lines of his favorite bard so moved and agitated him with a thrill of almost painful pleasure as on this morning, when they were accidentally pronounced with lively feeling, yet affecting simplicity, by the melting voice of his companion.

Her ladyship had quitted him at the hall door to visit the duchess; and Orlando, proceeding to the empty saloon, had spent the intervening time

in endeavouring to catch the precise cadence in which Lady Xerena had repeated a passage that still vibrated on his ear, when he was summoned to the projected conference of her grace.

Great was the surprise of the youth on learning, after some introductory compliments from the lady, that he was expected immediately to enter on the study of the part of Romeo, with a view to exhibit it on the next opening of her grace's theatre.

Orlando pleaded with much diffidence, in excuse, his total inexperience in dramatic representations, which, he said, he feared would render it impossible for him to acquit himself with credit in the eyes of so nice a judge as herself; but this little opposition only rendered the duchess more eager to conquer his scruples.

She replied, that she could answer for his possessing all the essential re-

quisites for affording her entire satisfaction---that the inexperience of which he complained was much in his favor, since it gave her ground to look for an originality in his style of acting the character, which would, with her, more than compensate for his want of practice in *stage tricks*; and she declared that she promised herself so much gratification in giving him the necessary hints to qualify him for the part, that she could not allow of any scrupulous over-delicacy in him to disappoint her.

Thus encouraged, Orlando had consented to place himself under her grace's tuition, when Lady Xerena, who had been sent by her mother to fetch a volume of Shakespear, re-entered the room, followed by Mr. Westerly.

"Now, Mr. Altringham," said the duchess, smiling graciously on him,

"to convince you how serious I am in this affair, I am about to appoint you a Juliet, almost as unhackneyed in scenic representation as yourself.--- Xerena has never made but one attempt to acquire theatrical fame, and that, to say the truth, was on so short a notice, that she could scarcely be said to have had a fair chance of success. You see, therefore, you are about to start pretty fairly as rivals; and it is my intention to begin immediately our first rehearsal."

Her grace *did* begin this rehearsal, which continued daily during the remaining stay of Orlando and the marquis at the lodge.

The day before Orlando's departure for Altringham Castle, (whither the marquis had promised to accompany his cousin, on the recovery of his mother) Mr. Westerly was summoned from the scene of action to a very old

erony of his, whom he had not seen for a considerable time, in consequence of his having been abroad; but who, from his former intimacy with him, had been pretty well let in to the private family history of Castle-ossory.

"Pray, Westerly," demanded Mr. Boston, after the gentlemen had exhausted the topic of their own immediate concerns; "pray, Westerly, how go on their illustrious graces?—Have you had any more Snap-dragon Lodge affairs since I left England?"

"Why faith, no," replied the gentleman, carelessly, "nothing worth recording; though I think we are now," added he, as if suddenly recollecting himself, "in as fair a way as heart could wish to have a new publication of as striking an adventure in their family annals, as any they have ever yet boasted."

"Indeed! you make me curious," observed Mr. Boston, eagerly.

"*I* make you curious!" returned his companion, laughing: "no, no, Ned; curiosity is a failing which, thou well knowest, thou hast fairly inherited from thy mother! I have only, like a good-natured fool, gratified its incessant cravings. But to the point. Lady Xerena Elmeron has turned out one of the finest girls in the universe."

"That I always foretold," interrupted Mr. Boston.

"True, Ned; but what your wisdom could not foretel, (because you don't understand the word) is, that she is to the full as *romantic* as she is beautiful. You know the duke was always fond of her from a mere brat; but lately he has been more: he is now grown proud of her; and no wonder. He told me, (confidentially, mark me) the evening before he left

us, that he had made up his mind on one matter, which was, that Lady Xerena shall be presented as soon as her mother is recovered; for if her grace will not undertake it, he will get his aunt, Lady Fitzosborne Altringham, to do him that favor. This, he said, he had that morning distantly hinted to her grace, who was so angry (I have since had reason to suspect) at his threatened interference, that she was very near throwing herself into a second violent fever. Now, I know it is *her* plan never to bring out Xerena (if she can help it) till she has married off Apolonia; and if others are of my mind, there is no great chance of that."

" You suspect, then," interrupted Mr. Boston, who thought his comrade was taking a very circuitous road to the point, " you suspect then, Frank, that, when the time fixed by the duke arrives, there will be a pretty sharp

contest between their graces, whether her ladyship shall or shall not be presented?"

"No," replied Mr. Westerly; "I suspect, on the contrary, that before matters come to that crisis, Lady Xerena will spare them all contest, by being with her lover safely on the other side the Tweed."

"Lover!" echoed the surprised Mr. Boston.

"Lover! aye, or husband, if you will; for to make him so will, of course, be the object of their excursion to Gretna Green."

"Pray, Frank, be intelligible, and inform me who this lover is before you actually marry him to her ladyship?"

"Know then," replied Mr. Westerly, "that we have had here, for some weeks past, a youth just cut out to win the heart of any romantic girl in christendom; and I have told you,

that Lady Xerena is one exactly answering to that description. Orlando Altringham is certainly as fine a young fellow as you ever saw, and as singular a one too ; for he is even now as unspoilt, as unsophisticated by the world, as if he had come into it but yesterday ! There is a sort of ingenuous simplicity about him which, at times, appears to me *veritablement comique* ; yet, when he becomes animated, a flash of his eye betrays the enthusiasm and genius of his mind. Now, be it known, that Lady Xerena roused, at the very first glance, all the ardour of his character. I happened to have my attention fixed on him at the time, therefore speak from personal observation. With this beginning, you may guess how matters have gone on since, when you hear that, for some weeks past, young Altringham and her ladyship (with the entire approbation of

the duchess, be it noted) have been daily walking together---talking together---reading together---singing together; and, to crown all, by the prudent mother's especial commands, acting in her presence the part of lovers together!"

"Merely fictitious ones, I presume?" remarked his auditor.

"By St. George," returned Mr. Westerly, warmly, "if you had been present, as I was, at this morning's rehearsal, (which, as young Altringham quits the lodge to-morrow, they knew would be the last they should have for some time) you would have agreed with me, that there was not much fiction in it. There was no mistaking the feeling which influenced Orlando in speaking,

"It is my lady: O, it is my love:
O that she *knew* she were!
She speaks, yet she says nothing; what of that?
Her *eye* discourses; I will answer it."

"This may prove the poor *lad* to be far gone in what they call the *tender passion*," replied Mr. Boston; "but it is no evidence to me that so desirable a girl as you represent Lady Xerena Elmeron, is in any danger of throwing herself away on an untitled younger brother."

"You would have been of a different opinion, Ned," rejoined Mr. Westerly, "if, a few minutes after, you had seen her raised colour---her downcast eye---and heard the tender, timid, melting accents in which she addressed to him---

"Dost thou love me? I know thou wilt say, Ay; And I will take thy word."

"Can you suppose, then, that the duchess has actually lost her senses, or that she was not as quick-sighted as yourself to all this *love-making*?" asked the gentleman, in a tone of incredulity.

"I don't believe any one breathing understands all the circuitous windings of her grace's crooked mind so well as myself, who have known her ever since she was of an age to play with her doll," replied Mr. Westerly, "and I firmly believe I have in the present instance fathomed the depth of all her schemes. There is one rule, which she laid down to herself some eighteen years ago, when the evil spirit (of opposition) took entire possession of her, and she has invariably acted up to it ever since;--I mean the systematically thwarting the duke in every wish he forms. Now, he has unadvisedly, and like a blockhead, as he is, given her to understand that he is already looking forward to Lady Xerena's forming some very suitable connection, which he is persuaded will soon follow her introduction into the world. I know he told her grace as much at their last

interview. The consequence of all this naturally is, that she has ever since been employed in doing all in her power to circumvent him, by encouraging the imprudent attachment which it is incredible but she must see. See it ?---by Jove, it occupies her daily and her nightly thoughts--- She lives on it, as the means of frustrating the hopes of the duke !”

“ You think her, then, so thorough a viper,” observed Mr. Boston, taking out his snuff-box, “ that, for the sake of plaguing her husband, she would not scruple to lend a hand to the ruin of her own child ?”

“ The ruin !” repeated his companion ; “ I did not go so far as that, either ! Orlando Altringham, although a younger brother, is of an ancient and very respectable family. Lady Xerena would not be the first daughter of the house of Castle-ossory, who has mar-

ried into it! The young man is designed for the church, and I am credibly informed will be put into possession of some valuable family livings, as soon as he is old enough to hold them. The duchess, with all her faults, is generous; and will make a merit of coming forward to assist in placing them in affluence, when the affair is passed recall; so that, if the girl and he are seriously *in love*, as they call it, there will be no great harm in the case, except as it will disappoint the duke's ambitious views, who, I know, would run mad at the bare proposal of such a match. Now, be it noted, that her grace, on the contrary, will gain two very favorite objects by this aforesaid *Scotch step* of the young ones; first, by paying off her long hoarded grudge against her husband for his partiality to Xerena; secondly, mark me, by seeing the girl

placed in a station where, without any serious wound to the family pride, she can never clash with her grace's views for Apolonia's establishment; and with all her foolery about that piece of insipidity she feels, (though she won't admit it even to herself) that her sister must infallibly be a formidable rival to her. So now, Ned, I have sketched you a plan of this *mine* which my noble cousin is delving, as a magazine for mischief, and from which I expect, some day, as noisy an explosion as that which about eighteen years ago followed the discovery of the *veritable* Mrs. Lightfoot, of Cavendish-square! --- Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

The hearty laugh in which the gentlemen for some minutes indulged, at the recollection of the confusion and perplexity of his angry grace, was followed by Mr. Boston's saying,

"But why, my boy, don't you circumvent the lady, by communicating your suspicions to Castle-ossory?"

"*I* communicate to Castle-ossory! *I* interfere between man and wife!" exclaimed his companion: "no, no, man; Frank Westerly has more worldly wisdom than that comes to. He is very well content with remaining a quiet spectator of this illustrious pair's comedies; and has no ambition of figuring in them as an actor, believe me! But, by St. George, there go the turtles:---why, Ned, dost think me such a barbarian, as to interrupt their cooing!---Aye, poor youth——

———“Eyes, look your last—
Arms, take your last embrace! and lips, O you
The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss
A dateless bargain.”

While these facetious gentlemen were thus amusing themselves at the expense of the young persons who

had formed the principal subject of discourse, they were, with heavy and foreboding hearts, anticipating the separation of the morrow ; not by words, the secret of each was locked in the bosom which it wrung. It was a secret which they had never yet dared whisper, even to themselves; yet in the sympathetic melancholy which hung on either, the other found a consoling charm.

Lady Xerena, unaccustomed to attention or personal kindness from those with whom she lived, had never experienced that tenderness of manner which is so dear to the heart of sensibility from any one but her father, at the period of Orlando's first introduction to her.

With his grace's company she had been but rarely indulged ; yet every visit he had paid them---every interview she had enjoyed with him---

every instance of paternal fondness he had ever shewn her---almost every expression he had ever addressed to her---were tenaciously treasured in her memory.

When her father left the lodge, Lady Xerena had hitherto been used, for some time after, to find it difficult to derive consolation from her favorite pursuits, from the depressing and more lively awakened consciousness of being solitary, unloved.

Had this chilling consciousness affected her since his last departure? No! for one remained behind him, capable of comprehending and estimating a character, still more lovely than her lovely person.

Orlando Altringham, young, enthusiastic, as keenly alive to mental as to personal beauty, with a tender heart and a ardent imagination, was not more formed to be peculiarly sus-

ceptible of the charms of Lady Xerena, than to communicate to her the same deep interest with which those charms had inspired him.

Heretofore, unused to read in the faces of those amongst whom she dwelt other sentiments towards her than indifference or disregard, she now first became sensible, in its fullest extent, "*que le visage humain, exercise un grand pouvoir, sur le cœur humain.*"

An intuitive consciousness of the secret approbation with which Orlando regarded her, expressed by every turn of his ingenuous countenance---the daily developement of the sympathy of mind which taught him justly to estimate her hitherto unappreciated character---a thousand little nameless precautions, the offspring of sensibility, by which he imperceptibly touched and interested her---roused Lady Xerena to a sense of happiness

which she fearlessly enjoyed, without attempting to analyze its cause.

The duchess, far from having dis-countenanced a partiality which there was so little probability his grace would ever sanction, either entirely overlooked it in her habitual egotism, or was so careless of the consequences as not only to engage them in an em-ployment calculated to fan the grow-ing flame which threatened to involve their future peace, but, by her marked attention towards Orlando, seemed to justify the affection with which it was so evident to others he had in-spired her daughter.

The Marquis of Cinquefoil's sudden determination one evening to set off for Altringham Castle the next day but one, first roused the lovers from the dream of pleasure in which they had been fearlessly indulging, to a keen sense of the pain each must

suffer by a separation from the other; for Orlando had no plea for declining to accompany him thither. He now recollects, that, within a week, the long vacation which had emancipated him from College would have expired; and he must be under the necessity of repairing to Cambridge, to resume far different studies from those which had of late so delightfully occupied him.

Orlando passed a sleepless night, in giving himself up to the most tormenting anxiety; since to the sorrow arising from being compelled to quit Lady Xerena, soon became super-added an apprehension which he could neither shake off nor support with calmness. It was, that, when he was far away, the duchess would appoint some substitute in his place to perform the part of Romeo with her younger daughter.

That any one but himself should ever address her ladyship in the language of that impassioned lover; that she should utter to another those tender sentiments of Juliet, to which he had himself listened from her lips with such exquisite pleasure; was an idea fraught with so much agony, as rendered him fully sensible of the nature of that empire, which Lady Xerena had acquired over his heart.

The benevolent and hitherto tranquil bosom of Orlando became tortured by a fiend, before a stranger to it. Jealousy with all her scorpions had found access there. He recollect ed with increasing apprehension, that the duchess in her strictures on his acting, had perpetually drawn comparisons between his theoretic powers and those of a young nobleman of whom he had heard her speak in terms of high encomium, Lord Astenhall.

Mr. Westerly had that morning offered to bet her grace, that his lordship would be amongst the first of those guests who would hurry to the lodge, on its being again thrown open for the reception of miscellaneous company. He had smiled significantly as he spoke ; and on Orlando's questioning him, some time after, on the subject of his late allusions, he had informed him, that the nobleman in question was very young---very rich ---very agreeable---a very excellent tragedian---and very much in favor with the illustrious lady of the mansion ! What so probable, as that *he* would be the usurper of what he now considered as his own exclusive right ?

On the following day, when Orlando obeyed the duchess's summons to the usual place of rendezvous, his ingenuous countenance bore striking tes-

timony to the state of mind in which he had passed the last eighteen hours.

He found Lady Xerena (whom he had not seen since the preceding evening) sitting with her mother. An air of gravity nearly amounting to dejection sat on her features ; and her voice, ever soft and penetrating to the partial ear of Orlando, at this time seemed to have acquired still tenderer and more affecting cadences, as she went through her part in the rehearsal, which succeeded the customary compliments on meeting.

Her grace was lavish of her praises on their improvement; and offered a gleam of consolation to the afflicted heart of Orlando, by insisting that he should give her his word that he would daily continue to study his character after his departure, as she was resolved on summoning him to the lodge (wheresoever he might be) on the re-

assembling of her friends, having determined on no account to dispense with his opening her theatre in a part which he personated so abundantly to her satisfaction.

Orlando listened to this declaration with a gratitude scarcely inferior to that with which a condemned wretch, whose wishes still cling to life, receives a respite from immediate execution. He fervently pronounced the promise her grace exacted, and soon after seized an opportunity of quitting the apartment, that he might follow Lady Xerena into the grounds, who, having found herself incapable of longer concealing the unusual depression which hung on her spirits, hurried from the dressing-room as soon as she had gone through her part, for the purpose of trying the effect of her generally successful panacea---a walk.

Orlando soon reached her ladyship,

and, taking from her the little basket of food with which she had been providing herself for her birds, asked permission to attend her to the lovely spot they inhabited.

This permission granted, a silence of considerable duration ensued, while with rapid steps they proceeded along a path, running in a different direction from that which led through the *vale of silence*, towards the smiling *Tempè*, on which that valley opened.

A taciturnity so unusual in any of their former rambles was first broken by Orlando, who, forgetting in the overflow of gratitude her grace's recent invitation had inspired in him the odious portrait depicted of her by Mr. Westerly, abruptly ejaculated, "What an excellent lady is the duchess! --- her kindness towards me, since my happy residence here has left an impression which can never be effaced from my memory."

"My mother," replied Lady Xerena, in a tone expressive of strong emotion, "since her illness has, I think, become daily more and more——"

Her ladyship's voice failed her, and she paused to acquire command of it; but before she was able to utter the tribute of filial gratitude which hovered on her lips, the name of Altringham, impatiently and frequently repeated by some one behind them, made both start and turn back.

It was the Marquis of Cinquefoil, who, followed by Fribourg, was galloping full speed after them, and in the next minute he was at their side.

"Why, my good fellow," said his lordship, "at what a rate you must have walked! I began to think Westerly had misinformed me as to the route you had taken, till I caught a glimpse of you from the hill. I am going to Beresford's, to make one

more trial for his greys ; I know they will please Lady Ismena Daventry. Fribourg tells me, that Walter overheard her say, one day in Hyde Park, that they were the prettiest creatures she ever saw ; so, as I have set my mind on driving them down to the castle, I shall offer him his own terms. Now, as Beresford is never so good-humoured a fellow as over his bottle, I intend to take Fribourg's counsel of dining with him, and not telling him the object of my visit, till I have plied him with a few extra glasses. It is probable, therefore, that I shall not see you again before to-morrow ; and I wished to tell you, that, as it is settled we are to be off before sunrise, you had better have every thing ready to-night."

" So very early ! " stammered Orlando, turning pale at the certainty, that he should by this circumstance

lose all chance of seeing Lady Xerena before setting out.

"This is a matter settled by Fribourg," replied the marquis, "who insists on it that we are to be in our travelling carriage by break of day."

"Fribourg!" repeated Orlando, colouring with indignation at the idea that the arbitration of a point of such moment in his estimation, as whether he should or should not be gratified by a sight of Lady Xerena, on the morning of his departure, had been committed to such hands.

"Monsieur," said Fribourg, (bowing with the air of one who is resolved that no consideration shall induce him to recede from his previous determination) "Monsieur, mi lor tink vid moi, dat de bon heur is most best et commode. Mi lor vude evitér les adieux."

"Fribourg, my very good fellow,"

interrupted the marquis, turning to Orlando, “ is the most despotic rascal in the world ! so it signifies nothing to contend with him ; he shall, however, take care to have you called in time. Xerena, not a word to my mother of our plan of early decampment.---Take care of yourself, my dear,” added he, shaking her affectionately by the hand, “ and let me give you a piece of advice, which I know is seldom unpalatable to young ladies; get a good establishment, if you can, by the time we next see you. . *Alons, Fribourg.*”

As soon as the marquis had uttered this, he clapped spurs to his steed, and in a few seconds was out of sight.

Orlando, with a profound sigh, pursued his way, with Lady Xerena, towards the aviary. The random, common-place observation that had accidentally escaped the marquis, immediately following the disappoint-

ment of a hope whereon he had been resting, that he should yet once again before his departure be the companion of her early ramble, brought back all the vague jealousy, and heaviness of heart, which had been, for a short time, dissipated by the flattering invitation of the duchess.

"Have you your flute with you?" asked Lady Xerena, plaintively, when they had reached her aviary, leading the way, as she spoke, to the cage of an American mock-bird, which Orlando had taken considerable pains to teach a composition of his own, with which her ladyship had been greatly pleased in the early stage of their acquaintance. "I wish this little mimie once more to hear you breathe that air. I should grieve much, (added she, with *naïveté*) were he to forget the lesson you have taught him; I shall love to listen to it when you are no longer here."

Orlando, in extreme agitation, drew out his flute, and applied it to his trembling lips; but they refused to perform their accustomed office. After several fruitless attempts, he was on the point of addressing her ladyship, when the bird, who had for a considerable time been used daily to follow the melody of the young musician, as if now regarding the sight of the instrument as the signal for exhibition, began the air of himself, which he executed in a manner not less surprising, than gratifying, to his mistress.

While Lady Xérena, with a countenance expressive of satisfaction, gave her attention to the correct and varied notes of the wonderful little songster, that of her companion was, with intense admiration, fixed on her.

A momentary pause, which succeeded the concluding tones of the warbler, was first broken by a sigh

that seemed to rend the bosom of Orlando; then, losing all sense of his temerity, in the complicated emotions which agitated him, he repeated, with passionate tenderness, while his eyes dwelt on hers: "I would I were thy bird!"

Did Lady Xerena reply, "Sweet, so would I; yet I should kill thee with much cherishing?"

No; electrified, covered with confusion, scarcely conscious what she did, she bent precipitately over the mock-bird, seeking to conceal the deep blushes which dyed her cheek, beside his plumage. Yet, though she spoke not, the enamoured youth thought he discovered, in the spontaneous action of Lady Xerena, an air of caressing tenderness towards the bird, excited by the idea his words had just inspired. He dared to hope, that though timidity forbade her tongue from giving ex-

pression to sentiments fearlessly uttered by the less retiring Juliet, an affection, not less fondly nurtured, governed her gentle bosom.

A hope so precious to his heart roused, in one moment, all the latent enthusiasm of Orlando's character. Catching a silken ringlet of Lady Xerena's hair, which the breeze, loosening from its slight bondage, had wafted towards him; he pressed it eagerly to his lips, and in the next moment would have fallen at her feet, and poured forth the passion which filled his bosom, had he not been suddenly checked by the appearance of a stranger, whom he perceived leaping the adjacent paling, and then making towards them.

It was Mr. Boston. The constitutional curiosity of that gentleman had been so roused by the late details of Mr. Westerly, that he had slipped away

while his companion was speaking to the marquis, and had followed the young couple with the impertinent view of endeavoring to discover if any serious attachment actually existed between them.

Mr. Boston was a man of ruined fortune, partly from the thoughtless extravagance of his immediate predecessor---partly from his own. His late visit to the continent had been induced by the troublesome clamour of his creditors, and his return rendered practicable through the benevolent interference of his relations. He owed the friendship Mr. Westerly professed for him to the profuse liberality with which his purse had been long open to that selfish man; and for the honor of being an admitted visitor of her grace, he had been indebted to a very remarkable power of which he was possessed.

It was that of a wonderful talent for all kinds of mimicry or imitation, as well as a facility of apparently unhinging his joints, distorting his form, and writhing his features into a character so different from the “human face divine,” that he could at pleasure render his whole person utterly unlike what nature made it; and might even have baffled the most experienced naturalist to determine to what species of animal he belonged.

This extraordinary capability rendered him so valuable a pantomimic buffoon, that the first specimen he gave of his endowment at the Snapdragon Lodge Theatre, was decisive of his future reception at that mansion.

He had owed the opportunity for displaying his grotesque contortions to the good offices of Mr. Westerly, an obligation he never entirely forgot; and though, during his several visits,

he had not been once admitted into the duchess's own drawing-room, (an honor to which none but her very choice associates were ever privileged) he was still sufficiently pleased to form one of the miscellaneous company who annually resorted to the lodge to become, on any terms, a constant attendant there.

On these occasions, one of Mr. Boston's principal amusements had been that of listening to the details of the many whimsical matrimonial scenes between the duke and duchess, to which Mr. Westerley had been an eye-witness, an illustrious pair, respecting whose proceedings he soon began to feel the most lively curiosity.

Of the young ladies, who were still children when he abruptly quitted England, he had seen little; yet the terror he once excited in Lady Xerena (then scarcely past babyhood) by an

exhibition of his tricks, had impressed on his memory an image of her early beauty, and the remarkable expression of her countenance which prepared him in some measure for what he now beheld.

Had Mr. Boston been susceptible of that troublesome delicacy, which feels uneasy at the sensation of having intruded, on discovering the ill-concealed emotion of the young persons whom he approached, he would have turned into another path without addressing, or even appearing to notice them. But that gentleman was either so happily exempt from the inconvenient apprehension that he could possibly be unwelcome, or so incapable of sacrificing his own inclination for the sake of avoiding to give pain to others, that the impatient glances of Orlando, and the averted looks of Lady Xerena, were alike insufficient to check his advance.

"I humbly presume I have the honor of addressing Lady Xerena Elmeron!" said Mr. Boston, bowing profoundly as he spoke, "I hope I have the happiness of seeing your ladyship well?"

"I have not the pleasure of knowing to whom I am indebted for the favor of the inquiry," replied Lady Xerena, vainly endeavouring to recover her accustomed ease.

Mr. Boston, with an obtrusiveness of manner which he had acquired during his residence abroad, soon recalled himself to her ladyship's remembrance, by mentioning the alarm he had once given her by his celebrated contortions! a circumstance which had left a very disagreeable impression of that gentleman on her memory.

The relation, however, while it brought back to Lady Xerena the re-

collection of the event to which Mr. Boston had alluded, and the person of that gentleman gave her time to recover, in some degree, from her recent embarrassment.

Orlando, in the mean time, cruelly tormented at finding himself deprived of hearing, from the lips of Lady Xerena, an encouragement of those presumptuous hopes in which he had for a moment rashly indulged, glowing with resentment towards the intrusive stranger, who was so unmercifully robbing him of time never to be recalled, and rendered desperate by perceiving that it was Mr. Boston's intention to accompany them during the remainder of their walk, at length demanded, with a fierceness wholly foreign to his character, if either the duchess or the Marquis of Cinquefoil had commissioned him with any message to the young lady under his protection.

"I have not had the good fortune of seeing either of them since my arrival," replied the gentleman (affecting not to notice the imperative tone in which this question was uttered.) "I am proud, however, to say, I had the singular satisfaction of an interview with his grace, yesterday, in Berkeley-square. I think I never saw the duke looking better; it was from him I learnt that his noble family at present occupy the lodge."

This interview (by boasting of which Mr. Boston intended obliquely to insinuate that he was sanctioned in claiming acquaintance with his grace's daughter) had amounted to no more than his having been accidentally passed by that nobleman, as he crossed the hall, in his way to his carriage. Mr. Boston had called at his mansion to inquire out Mr. Westerly of the domestics; and all the information he

had gained of the family had been *purchased* of the duke's valet.

His misrepresentation of the circumstances under which he had visited Berkeley-square, however, answered the purpose he intended it should, by silencing any further hints on the part of Orlando, of his impertinence, and leading Lady Xerena into asking several questions respecting her father, with less constraint than she had before shewn to him.

Though Mr. Boston had exhibited no external marks of discomposure at the haughty interrogatory of Orlando, he had been, nevertheless, secretly nettled by it, and resolved on paying off the grudge he owed him by *playing* with his irritability instead of resenting it.

In pursuance of this intention, he had no sooner, by the aid of drawing fearlessly on his inventive powers, satisfied

the filial interest manifested by her ladyship's questions, than looking steadfastly at her companion, whose eyes still sparkled with unbridled impatience, he exclaimed---

" It is Mr. Altringham, I humbly conceive, whom I have the pleasure of addressing ! I should have known you, my good Sir," added he, in a puritanical tone, " amongst a thousand, from your amazing likeness to Sir Godfrey !"

Now, in reality, Mr. Boston had never seen Sir Godfrey, nor any individual of his family, till about an hour before, that he had caught a glimpse of Orlando himself, as he was crossing the lawn, in company with Lady Xerena ; consequently, he knew his name only from the intelligence he had gained through Mr. Westerly.

This pantomimic gentleman, however, had so long accustomed himself

to play the *buffoon*, that he was thought, by the best judges, to have arrived at perfection in the accomplishment of *quizzing*, a species of *wit* which formed no unimportant part of his character.

It struck him, at the present moment, that by *boring* the petulant youth with absurd *rhodomontade*, he was, in the irritated state of his feelings, inflicting a severer chastisement on him, than by meeting his hostilities in that open way which might lead to their measuring their swords.

It unfortunately happened, however, that the address with which Mr. Boston followed up the attack that he had thus characteristically opened, failed of inflicting any additional pain on the object at whom it was directed, or of drawing applause on himself.

The most brilliant display of talents, before an audience disqualified by

total ignorance of the art exhibited, from duly appreciating the difficulties and merits of the performance, can never awaken in such persons the same delight, nor call forth the same spontaneous burst of admiration, as it would elicit from a more enlightened company; yet the former may still have derived considerable gratification. But the art of *quizzing* has not this advantage; since, to the uninitiated in this very fashionable recreation, the brightest coruscations of its most celebrated professors must (for want of the magic clue) appear no better than very common-place, vapid, and unmeaning phrases.

It behoves those *quizzers*, therefore, who would insure the triumph of which they may be ambitious, never to attempt putting forth their quizzing powers, without first ascertaining that they have, at least, one of their order.

present. Then they may fearlessly draw forth the shuttle-cock of their fraternity, (which is invisible to the *unilluminated*) and while the players at the game are bandying it for their own exclusive amusement, they may perpetually hit with it some unguarded member of the company, whose unconsciousness that he has been hit at all, forms the chief diversion of the game !

Had Mr. Boston followed this judicious plan, he would not have experienced the mortification of discovering that his attempts to *quiz* Orlando had wholly failed, from his having no one to participate with him in the humour of the pastime.

So entire a novice was Lady Xerena in this accomplishment, and so far was she from comprehending the *mystic* glance Mr. Boston had given her, previous to his opening his attack

on Orlando, that she had never doubted the fact of his being well acquainted with the phisiognomy of Sir Godfrey ; and perceiving nothing either extraordinary or ridiculous in a son bearing a likeness to his father, had listened with a gravity not less impenetrable than that of his to whom he had addressed the string of *rhodomontade* he had been uttering. The gentleman, however, might have pleaded in his justification the having believed it impossible, that a young person of Lady Xerena's pretensions should have been brought up in ignorance of an amusement so highly relished by those fashionable people with whom Mr. Boston had most associated.

The discovery of his error made him adroitly change the theme he had chosen, for one which he doubted not must prove more agreeable to the lady. He praised the beauty of the grounds,

and displayed his recently adopted connoisseurship in landscape painting, by pointing out in very technical terms (though they were frequently misapplied) several views, which he said were worthy the pencil of a Claude. He talked fluently of the *breadth* and *repose*, which some of them were capable of receiving from a master's hand; who would felicitously concentrate their lights, and give an accumulated and general force to the bold masses of rock, by deepening their shadows. He then dealt out, in a very parrot-like manner, some hackneyed observations on the happy effect to be produced by a judicious disposition of the *Chiaro oscuro*, and illustrated his observations by some *cognoscenti* comparisons, between the characteristic excellencies of Waterloo, and Berghen Felix Myer, and Wooverman.

Mr. Boston, who still enjoyed all the talk to himself, ceased not till he had completely exhausted his newly acquired vocabulary ; when he closed a subject on which he had been enlarging exclusively for his own amusement, by protesting that he had never seen a place which so completely united in itself all the variety of picturesque and sylvan beauties, as this spot, except the justly celebrated *Quinta of Las Delicias*, in the neighbourhood of Lisbon.

As he pronounced these last words, the party arrived within sight of the lodge, towards which, Lady Xerena with an accelerated pace immediately directed her steps. They were met half way on the lawn by Mr. Westerly ; who had been surprised on his return to the apartment, in which he had left his visitor, at not finding him there.

Impertinently curious, as he knew that gentleman to be, he did not believe him capable of seeking its indulgence by this unwarrantable intrusion on Lady Xerena; but struck with the real truth on descrying him some time after, from a window, walking by her side, he left the mansion with a view to relieve her from the further importunity of one whom he was well assured could not be otherwise than very disagreeable to her ladyship.

On joining the party, Mr. Westerly had taken the arm of his comrade, and endeavoured to draw him off, but did not succeed in detaching him from them till they had reached the steps of the portico; when instead of allowing him to ascend, he forcibly led him round to the other side of the building, under pretence of consulting on the lameness of his favorite horse.

Meanwhile, Lady Xerena, with increasing speed, turned up the steps, and at that moment, her light mantle which had been gradually loosened from its fastening during her walk, was by the strong current of air carried back on the lawn, whither Orlando hastened to recover it; then, half frantic with impatience, he pursued her into the mansion; but she had disappeared from the portico before he entered it.

He now sought her from room to room through the whole suite of apartments which the family were accustomed to occupy, in vain! he could discover no trace of her having entered either of them since her return; and with despair in his heart, at thus perceiving the last hour in which he had any chance of seeing her alone during his remaining stay, thus rapidly passing away, he proceeded to the duchess's

drawing room ; in which he found only her grace and Lady Apolonia, whose inquiries after her sister convinced him that they knew not that she was returned.

A terrible apprehension now seized on the heart of Orlando ; it was, that in his impetuosity, he had misconstrued the embarrassment of the ingenuous Lady Xerena, at the moment of Mr. Boston's cruel intrusion, that the deep suffusion which had burnt on her cheek, arose from the wound her pride and delicacy had received, by the temerity into which he had suffered himself to be hurried---that displeasure, not sympathy, was the real sentiment it had awakened !

As these fears gathered strength, he found himself incapable of supporting any part in the conversation, which was from time to time addressed to him ; and abruptly quitting the ladies,

returned to re-examine the apartments he had before vainly searched.

But he found not there the object who filled his thoughts; and with increasing agitation, as he impatiently traversed them, he took a retrospective view of the deportation of Lady Xerena, from the instant of Mr. Boston so suddenly bursting upon them, to that of her precipitate escape from himself on their reaching the mansion.

During that interval, had she permitted her eye to meet his---had she once addressed him?---By any little attention had she given him room to hope that he had not offended her---that she participated in the pain under which he suffered from the intrusion of a third person?

No; on the contrary, the very moment he found himself at liberty to address her without witness, she had fled him. Though she knew that only one

short hour interposed between the present and that which would cut off all possibility of particular intercourse between them, before his departure, she had fled!---had concealed herself from his eager search---had left him a prey to doubt, to sorrow, and repentance!

Yet what had he to expect, even though Lady Xerena had indulged him with the opportunity for which he pined?---To what could it have led if she had listened to the solemn declaration of his affection?---Could he urge to her any claims which might justify his raising his eyes to Lady Xerena Elmeron?---Had he any pretensions which he could offer to the Duke of Castle-ossory for aspiring to the hand of his daughter?---himself, a younger brother---without fortune---with no other expectation than that of some family livings, which he was not yet of an age to hold?

Nature had not formed Orlando presumptuous, though love had, for a moment, made him bold. Every thing, since his residence at the lodge, had conspired to betray him into nourishing an affection which there was no shadow of probability could ever terminate happily! The flattering and delusive favor of the duchess ---the footing of near relationship on which he had been received by the whole family---the sweet and engaging manners of Lady Xerena, whose native candour had led her to testify the pleasure she had tasted in his society; and, above all, the dangerous occupation in which he had been engaged by her grace with this attractive girl, had tended to encourage a prepossession, conceived at first sight, till it had grown into a passion which threatened to mark with melancholy many of his future days.

The character of Orlando was of no common cast. Mild in manners as he was enthusiastic in disposition, the ardour of his mind had been, till very lately, solely directed to the pursuit of studies in which he had found a never failing source of delight. His only mistress then had been his muse, to whom he had dedicated his affections with a devotion so exclusive, that he seemed little likely to chuse another object for his idolatry.

Yet the romantic lore from whence his mind had been accustomed to derive its most palatable food, had but prepared him to retain, with firmer tenacity, the first powerful impression it received of love.

In Lady Xerena Elmeron, he believed he had found embodied all of ideal beauty over which his imagination had ever paused enamoured. His poetic notions of perfection appeared

all realized in her. Fearless, because thoughtless, of danger, he had followed---contemplated---studied her, till his heart became inflamed with a vehemence of passion which had for awhile bewildered his reason; which had hurried him into the extravagance, as he now dreaded, of construing those too fascinating courtesies on her part, which owed their origin solely to the ties of consanguinity, into an exclusive attachment to himself.

What had been his conduct while laboring under this fatal delusion?--- He had taken advantage of the confiding candour of Lady Xerena, to shock her by a declaration of the presumptuous wishes to which her unsuspecting confidence had given birth! ---Yes, he was now convinced it was the blush of indignation, not of sympathy, which had so deeply stained her cheek.---The intrusion of Mr.

Boston had only saved him from irreconcilably offending her, not intercepted the encouragement of hopes, rash as they were vain.

Such were, in part, the reflections to which the protracted absence of Lady Xerena, and a review of his own humble pretensions, when opposed to those to which the daughter of the Duke of Castle-ossory, endowed with youth, loveliness, and wealth, might reasonably aspire, which filled the bosom of Orlando with despair---which persuaded him that Lady Xerena had eluded the interview he sought, only because her gentle nature, incapable of inflicting the punishment his temerity deserved, chose rather to leave him to the recovery of his disordered senses, than to overwhelm him by a display of her just indignation.

The first dinner bell roused him

from these torturing apprehensions to a sense that a few minutes more and he should again behold her.

In what manner would she meet him?---Could she still preserve towards one, on whom she had never before looked but with a countenance beaming with benevolence, the chilling reserve that had stiffened her features during their walk home! Should he be permitted to occupy his usual place beside her, or would she find some pretext for depriving him of that last feeble ray of pleasure?

In a state of mind which would have excited pity in any breast but that of a coquette, Orlando was awaiting the peal that by re-assembling the scattered family, promised to clear up these distracting doubts, when the sound of footsteps in the anti-room, made him impatiently approach the open door. He was met there by a

footman, who put into his hands the following

LETTER.

"Dear Orlando, I wish you to follow me instantly to Beresford's;--- don't delay setting out with David, as soon as you get this. You can serve me essentially by your advice, so I make no apology for taxing your good offices.

Your's,

CINQUEFOIL."

"Do you know, David, for what your lord wants me?" demanded Orlando, impatiently, perceiving in his immediate compliance in this summons, the last chance cut off of his again seeing Lady Xerena.

"I can't say, Sir, that I know any thing for certain," replied the man, "but I am afraid that my lord---that

is---Mr. Beresford---that is---but your honour must excuse——”

“How, what?” interrupted Orlando, who, from the hesitation of the man’s manner, more than from his words, felt alarmed, “any misunderstanding---any high words---any——”

“Indeed, Sir, I know nothing of it,” replied David, with increasing confusion, “but I hope you will make haste to go to his lordship, you may serve his lordship, as Monsieur Fri-bourg said over and over again, while I was saddling the horses; yet, David, said he, don’t you go to alarm my lady duchess, but, said he——”

“Where are the horses?” inquired Orlando, who was now become as impatient to set out as he had at first been averse to it. This change had been produced by the recollection of a violent scene of altercation, to which he had lately been a witness, between

the marquis and Mr. Beresford, on the subject of *driving* the very same greys his lordship was gone to purchase; a scene which, but for his interference, might have terminated in a duel. "Lead the way, instantly," exclaimed Orlando, conjecturing that that alteration had been renewed, "I am impatient to join your lord."

David obeyed with alacrity, and Orlando, leaving such a message with a servant whom he met in the hall, as would account to her grace for his so unexpectedly setting out for Mr. Beresford's without alarming her, he, with a heavy heart, mounted one of the steeds in waiting, and rode full speed towards the place of his destination.

They had just reached the last gate which opened from the lodge grounds on the turnpike road, when the distant tones of the dinner bell struck on the ear of Orlando, announcing to him:

that the moment was arrived which, before his departure, he had been anticipating with such trembling anxiety, as promising to bring with it the dissipation or confirmation of his fears ; the moment, which would have forced Lady Xerena into his presence, which would have enabled him, as he now believed, to penetrate, at the first glance, into the real state of her feelings towards him ; to deprecate her resentment, if resentment he had excited ! But that precious moment was passing away !---unprofitably, uselessly passing !

Orlando continued to urge forward his horse, as if to escapé from the reflections which pursued him. He tried to keep in mind that he was going to perform an act of friendship to the brother of Lady Xerena, seeking in that idea consolation for the bitterness of his previous disappointments,

and in believing that he was about to save him from some rash act, in which his own life and that of his antagonist might have been endangered.

He arrived at Mr. Beresford's in a state of agitation which delighted the malicious heart of Fribourg, whom he found awaiting his arrival at the gate, and who had himself given such instructions to the simple David, as had led him into the conduct which had roused the apprehensions of Orlando for the marquis's safety.

In answer to his impatient inquiries for his lord, Fribourg, with an air of mystery and alarm, pointed to an adjacent shrubbery; and in the expectation of soon being guided to the supposed combatants by the report of pistols or the clash of swords, Orlando struck into it.

But vainly did he seek them there; and after wandering till the shades of

evening were fast descending, he returned to the house, where he learnt that the gentlemen had been for some time come back, and were now at dinner. Orlando requested to be immediately shewn to the marquis, whom he found, as had been reported to him, still at the table, over which good humour and jocularity seemed to preside.

Mr. Beresford, and one more gentleman, formed the whole of the party; to which Orlando was welcomed with a burst of pleasure, and forcibly compelled to sit down and partake of the convivial repast.

Prepossessed as he had been with the belief that something desperate had been likely to arise between the marquis and his host, his first sensation was that of satisfaction, at perceiving that all appearance of the hostility at which Fribourg had hinted, was now laid aside; but this temporary pleasure

soon subsided into regret that he had been so easily induced on a vague surmise, to quit the lodge at a moment so critical to his hopes.

A subsequent speech of the marquis completed Orlando's repentance, by acquainting him that the sole motive which had actuated his lordship in giving him the trouble of riding so far was, that Mr. Beresford had positively declined entering into any agreement for the sale of the greys, unless some witness were present on the part of the marquis, as well as on his own. This latter office, he said, Mr. Chapman had undertaken to perform; and he thanked his cousin very heartily for having, by so readily complying with his request, enabled him to beg the favor that he would do the same by him.

The few hours which Orlando was detained at the house of Mr. Beresford,

as evidence for the marquis in the discussion which followed, appeared to him so many ages. At length, perceiving that the affair was no more likely to be brought to a conclusion than on its first opening, and that the marquis was resolved not to quit the house till he had gained a point, which his comrade was as firmly determined not to yield to him, he seized a moment when the three gentlemen were all talking at once, to effect his own escape; and exploring his way to the stables, ordered one of the grooms to lead out his horse.

The men, however, unhappily for him, appeared as much inclined to debate as their masters, and were so long in settling which steed he had rode, (a point he was himself unable to ascertain, from the state of agitation in which he had mounted him) that his absence was discovered by Mr. Beres-

ford and his companions, who followed, in the determination of forcing him back to the room from whence he had effected his escape ; but Orlando was now rendered too desperate to submit to their further persecution. In a tone which convinced them their attempts to detain him were fruitless, he persisted in his resolution to depart, and a few minutes after, had the gratification of finding himself on his road to the lodge.

His pace, however, though pushed to the utmost speed of the animal, bore no proportion to his wishes ; and before he had measured half the distance he had to traverse, as if some evil genius had resolved to persist in thwarting him, a barrier was suddenly opposed to his further progress. A turnpike gate, which had been thrown wide open on his before passing it, was now most provokingly locked.

Orlando made some endeavours to compel his horse to surmount the impediment, but was at length obliged to await the rousing of the drowsy family.

The moon, then at its full, was shining on him in all its serene majesty; while the sleepy man, who had now descended, in his red woollen night-cap, from his chamber, was groping about in pursuit of the key which was to permit Orlando's passage through the envious gate. He consulted his watch: the hands of the dial pointed at half past nine; there was yet an hour and a half before the family of Castle-ossory would retire, and considerably within that time he might regain the lodge.

When the heart has been disappointed of some cherished hope, after suffering awhile under the first poignancy of regret, it eagerly catches at

the smallest portion of the desired good, as an inestimable alleviation of its sorrows.

Such were the feelings with which Orlando now clung to the chance that was still in his favor of seeing Lady Xerena again before his departure, were it but for two minutes, and in the presence of her whole family.

What discoveries were not the eyes of love capable of making in two minutes, even before a thousand witnesses? The first glance at the expression of her well known countenance on perceiving him---the manner of her returning his salutation---the tone in which she would bid him the accustomed "good night;" (conscious too, as she must be that they should meet no more) either of these opportunities would be sufficient to confirm or relieve him from the weight of mis-

sery he must continue to endure while laboring under the impression that he had offended her

With these ideas pressing on his mind, Orlando continued to push forward on his road. He, at length, reached the village church, scarcely half a mile distant from the first gate which opened on her grace's grounds. A short time after he passed this gate, and as he was entering the duchess' domain, the village clock struck ten. To the ear of Orlando, "*le son de l'airain dans l'elergnement, purait plaindre le jour qui se meurt.*" Day, lost indeed to him!---cruelly, irrecoverably lost!

No further impediment, however, now offered itself to prevent the eager youth from soon arriving at the portal of the lodge. The duchess' drawing room (in which the family had been, of late, accustomed to take their

(evening refreshment) was still illuminated, and the impatience of Orlando's knock soon gained him access to the mansion.

He instantly rushed past the porter, crossed the hall, ascended the staircase, traversed rapidly the anti-room, and threw open the door of the apartment in which he expected to find her, whose sympathy, or at least, pity, was necessary to soothe the violent and increasing perturbation of his mind.

Those only who, like Orlando, have rested their whole hopes of happiness on the attainment of one object---who, like him, after suffering hours of tormenting doubts and fears, have believed they, at all events, have discovered the means of terminating the misery of uncertainty, who have struggled with opposing difficulties to obtain the satisfaction for which they have panted, and at the moment they

believed it was within their reach, have beheld it vanish for ever from their eager grasp, can alone conceive the feelings with which the unhappy young man discovered that Lady Apolonia Elmeron only was with her mother.

A vacant chair on the other side the duchess, and a newspaper which lay on the table near it, seemed to testify that Lady Xerena had lately quitted them.

“Is that my son?” asked her grace, without raising her eyes from a plan of a new theatre, which Lord Astenhall, at his last visit, had submitted to her amendments, previous to his beginning its erection at his principal seat.

“No, mamma,” replied Lady Apolonia, “it is only Mr. Altringham.”

“Where is Cinquefoil?” demanded the duchess, now pushing the plan

from her, and fixing her eyes on the face of Orlando who, with the external appearance of calmness, had placed a chair next to the vacant one which hitherto had been occupied by Lady Xerena. “Is he returned, Mr. Altringham, or have you left him at Beresford’s?”

Orlando confirmed the latter supposition, adding that Fribourg and David, who were also there, would attend their lord home.

This assurance allayed the momentary apprehension which had assailed her grace on account of his safety, and she remarked, with a smile, that had Lady Xerena been aware of the marquis having staid behind, she would not have hurried away to her chamber with so much precipitation, on hearing the trampling of horses. But you know,” pursued her grace, “Cinquefoil’s love of late hours is

incorrigible; and Xerena, who over-walked herself this morning, thought it prudent to effect her escape, before he arrived to lay his usual embargo on the company."

The duchess then, who was not aware that Orlando had seen Mr. Boston, amused herself by giving him a sketch of that accomplished buffoon, alleging, that his extraordinary contortions in the part of Pierot far exceeded, in irresistible drollery, any she had ever seen exhibited on a public stage.

By degrees, however, her grace discovered a singularity in the appearance and manners of her auditor, which led her to suspect that the too pressing hospitality of Mr. Beresford had tempted him to deviate from his habitual temperance.

Still under this persuasion, she soon after retired with Lady Apolonia, repeating her intention of taking her

breakfast on the following morning with the marquis and himself, previous to their departure.

This intention the unhappy youth too well knew would be defeated by her son's resolution of setting off at break of day; and his perseverance in the plan was shortly after confirmed by the appearance of Fribourg, who said he was come, at his lord's desire, to see that every thing was in readiness before the appointed hour, and to acquaint Orlando that the marquis had determined on passing the intervening time with his friend. He therefore wished him to call at Mr. Beresford's in his travelling carriage, to take him up at the period agreed on.

Had Orlando founded any new hope on the chances that the marquis's reluctance to quit his convivial company might yet retard his intention of being far on his road to London,

before the re-assembling of his family in the morning, and that the delay of a few hours would yet afford him an opportunity of enjoying the interview with Lady Xerena which he had so ardently desired, he would have felt this information of Fribourg as a new and cruel disappointment; but he had ceased to hope from the moment it became evident that Lady Xerena had voluntarily, perseveringly, avoided his presence; that knowing, as she certainly did, that after this evening, they should meet no more, she had fled at his approach.

Yes! the too conscious heart of Orlando had instantly whispered him that her precipitate retreat had been urged, not by a wish of escaping from her brother, but himself.

Lady Xerena then, all gentle as she was, so very deeply resented the presumption of those unwarranted preten-

sions in which his recent conduct had persuaded her he had been indulging, that without deigning to soften her repulse by one word, one look of pity, she had abandoned him to all those sufferings by which the rash intemperance of youth is often expiated.

Thrown with her, as he had long been, on a footing of the most delightful intimacy, during which period no instance of pride or haughtiness had ever reminded him of the great disparity between their present rank or future expectations, Orlando seemed to have been awakened to the nature of those hopes which he had unconsciously fostered, only to perceive, in its full and terrific magnitude, the impassable barrier which worldly prudence opposed to their realization.

What madness to flatter himself the Duke of Castle-ossory could ever be brought to bestow on him the hand of

his favorite daughter! --- What a strange perversion of his reason to construe the obliging civilites he had experienced from her grace into any ground for hoping that she would not reject, with equal indignation, proposals for an alliance, at which her haughty spirit must revolt!

Mr. Westerly, in amusing himself and his companion, by anticipating the *Scotch step*, (as he facetiously called the elopement to which he doubted not Orlando would urge Lady Xerena) had judged much more from his own principles of action than from any acquaintance with those which governed the young man who had formed the subject of his jocularity.

Orlando loved with passionate devotion. In the moment of anticipated separation he had unpremeditatedly betrayed to its object that he did so; but never had he calculated on the

difficulties which opposed his happiness---never meditated on the possibility of taking advantage of the hospitality with which he had been treated by the duke and duchess---the unsuspecting frankness with which he had been admitted to the society of their daughters to rob them of one.

The dangerous trial to which he would in future have been exposed, had Lady Xerena encouraged him to hope that by such an act he might have secured her happiness, he was spared; and roused by the sudden disappointment her conduct had given him to a keen sense of the fatal delusion in which he had been indulging.

Torturing regret, at the presumption into which that delusion had hurried him, followed, and filled up the measure of his wretchedness.

That Lady Xerena ever could be his was certainly impossible! Her own

pride, it was evident, though unsupported by that of her parents, would have interposed between them an impassable barrier. Yet, but for his rashness, he might have continued, occasionally, to enjoy her intercourse, have been admitted to her friendship; he might, in a fictitious character, have even addressed her in the language of love! Happy privilege, as he now thought; privilege, by his own temerity justly and for ever forfeited! for that some pretext would now be framed to excuse his not receiving the promised summons on the re-assembling of her grace's friends, he felt persuaded.

Such were the galling reflections in which the first hour was passed by Orlando, after Fribourg had delivered to him the message of the marquis. The next was given to the resolution of seeking, by an expiatory sacrifice, to

deprecate the displeasure with which he had inspired Lady Xerena !

He should see her no more: yet the means were still within his power of leaving behind him some testimony of his sorrow and repentance; some testimony that might convert the indignation with which she now remembered him into pity for his sufferings. Was not the nature of Lady Xerena attuned to pity, and was not pity said to be a kin to love ?

Orlando hastened to execute the determination he had formed.

In his days of familiar intercourse with Lady Xerena, she had often sportively rallied him on his attachment to his flute, which he ever carried about him. He had as often pleaded, in extenuation of his constancy to that little instrument, that from his very early years, he had found it a never-failing consoler of all his youthful sor-

rows---a certain solace in those trifling instances of vexation and disappointment to which even the happiest life is subject; and Orlando's, hitherto, had been one of singular felicity.

Lady Xerena, at such times, had listened with pleased attention to many little characteristic details which he had related to her of the powerful effects its "eloquent discourse" had been capable of producing on his mind, even when most wayward. In the warmth of his language, he had once called it his constant friend, his adviser, his comforter, and Lady Xerena, though scarcely less enthusiastic in her love of music than himself, had often afterwards, in playful guise, been used to designate his flute by one of those epithets.

"Who will assist me in the invention of some severe penance, that we may inflict it on Orlando?" exclaimed

the duchess, good humouredly, one evening, (when he had firmly resisted her commands to read to them some of his own poetry) “ how shall we adequately revenge ourselves on him if he persists in disobeying me ? ”

“ We will rob him of *his comforter*, ” said Lady Xerena, in the same tone of gaiety.

“ Do you think, ” asked Orlando, the next morning, during their accustomed walk, “ that I really merited, last evening, the privation with which you threatened me ? ”

“ If you ask that question, seriously, ” replied Lady Xerena, “ I must answer you in the same tone of seriousness. I believe you incapable of any offence which could induce me to deprive you of your flute, whose value you have convinced me you rate so highly, that if ever I should hear that you have abandoned it, I

should conclude you must be very unhappy."

These words, and the earnestness with which they had been uttered, were still fresh in the tenacious memory of Orlando, and he resolved, by leaving behind him, this instrument of his former peaceful pleasures, to convince her, that he now courted the despondence, to which her severity, and his remorse at having offended her, had doomed him.

"Source and witness of my former tranquil joys," wrote Orlando, "once much loved flute, farewell! Thy master abandons thee not, till his last feeble ray of hope has quite expired! Yet, in bidding thee a last adieu, let him pour forth to thee who hast so often been the organ through which he has breathed the inspirations of his soul---let him pour to thee the misery which now oppresses it. That soul

has become filled with a passion destructive of its peace. The insidious tenderness unsuspectedly stole into it, and has left no room for ought, save *her* loved image.---Where then, can it seek refuge from despair?---In poetry? Lost is the new delight *she* taught its numbers to inspire.---In painting? What can ideal beauty do but remind him that 'thoughtless of beauty, *she* is beauty's self!'---In music? What is thy once loved melody, source of my former tranquil joys, but feeble echo's of her touching voice?

"Adieu, then, my flute! Orlando's breath shall awaken thy strains no more; yet should some pitying breeze steal through thy hollow tube, in plaintive murmurs, let it whisper in *her* ear that the fatal muse of hopeless love inspired his last lay."

Orlando now, with restless impatience, encompassed his flute by this

melancholy effusion of his afflicted heart, and resolving to deposit it at the foot of that willow, beneath whose shade he had first beheld the sleeping Lady Xerena, he quitted the mansion, and with hurried steps proceeded towards the well remembered spot.

The glowing colours in which the splendor of the morning sun had decked, on the day he first beheld them---the sylvan beauties which surrounded it, were now lost in gloomy shadows of night; while those objects which here and there the moon with her pale light revealed, seen by her silvery beams, appeared no more than spectres of what they once had been! ---Change, emblematic of Orlando's mind!

Near the spot on which he had betrayed to Lady Xerena the passion she had inspired, stood a group of mournful cypress trees. Orlando paused be-

neath their dark foliage, through whose still branches the mild lustre of the planet scarcely penetrated.

From hence he sought to ascertain the spot whereon she stood at the moment her involuntary emotion misled him to believe that she participated in the sentiments which were bursting from his lips. Her countenance---her attitude while listening but just before to the little songster who was executing the air he taught him---the die of modesty which flushed her cheek at his temerity in the succeeding moment ! These tender recollections, contrasted with her subsequent avoidance of him, caused Orlando to throw himself wildly on the turf which her light foot had so often pressed, and give a loose to all the bitterness of his despair.

It was some time after that his eye caught, at a little distance from him,

something glittering in the moon-beams; a feeling which he sought not to define caused him to examine it with impatient curiosity.---With what sensations did he recognize it to be the plain gold clasp which had that morning fastened the robe of Lady Xerena. In her sudden movement, on bending over the bird, he doubted not she had dropped it.

There was a little history connected with this clasp dear to the memory of Orlando. It had offered to his observation a trait of genuine beneficence in Lady Xerena, during his very early acquaintance with her, which was indelibly engraven on his heart.

One morning the duchess had declared herself dying of lassitude for want of something to amuse her, La Babiole soon after informed her that a female pedlar had called at the lodge with a box of trinkets, and suggested

that it might please her grace to examine them. "By all means," replied the lady, and the young itinerant was admitted.

At this moment Orlando had been engaged at a distant part of the room in copying some manuscript music for her grace. The marquis, who had been lolling for some time on the sopha, had fallen fast asleep, and Lady Xerena was employed in looking over a receipt book, in search of one whose effect her mother was desirous of trying on herself, when the young woman, trembling and abashed, in obedience to her grace's orders, placed her little box of ware on the table between herself and Lady Apolonia.

"Bless me! good woman," exclaimed her spoilt ladyship, as soon as she had taken a peep at the poor pedlar's humble display, "what a set of trash is here; did you ever, mamma,

see any thing so paltry?—Pray, good woman, why don't you get prettier things to sell? If you will take my advice, throw all these into the fire, and get an elegant and fashionable collection in their place."

The young woman sighed, but made no reply, till Lady Apolonia directly putting to her the question of "Why she did not procure more tasty and expensive articles," she answered timidly that she had not the means of purchasing them.

"What is the matter with the girl?" exclaimed the duchess, who had been looking more at her face than her merchandize. "If you had any thing here worth stealing, child, I should suspect, from that frightened look of yours, that you had not come by these things very honestly."

Here the young woman, with a simplicity which, to the attentive Or-

Iando, bore evidence of its truth, related that she was the only child of an unfortunate shopkeeper, now confined for debt; that his creditors had employed her to hawk about the few remaining articles yet unsold from his late effects, a small profit on the disposal of which they allowed her for her trouble; with which she had, hitherto, been enabled to support her imprisoned father.

"I am sure, good woman," observed Lady Apolonia, with the revolting apathy of pampered luxury, "I am sure, if your father has no other means of support than what you can earn for him, from the sale of such trash, he must be very badly off."

Orlando perceived a silent tear steal down the cheek of the unhappy girl, and his eyes involuntarily turned from her to Lady Xerena, the frequent changes of whose colour bore testi-

mony to the pain this scene inflicted on her.

For some time after, the duchess, who had thrown herself back in her easy chair, looked silently on, while her unfeeling daughter tumbled over and disarranged the whole contents of the box, exclaiming, from time to time, (without any wish of receiving an answer) "Pray what is this, and what is that? and how inelegant, and how unfashionable!"

At length her mother, growing weary of the sight of articles so uninviting, said, peevishly, "You may take away your rubbish, child, you have nothing there which suits us."

The youthful pedlar, with the resigned air of one to whom disappointment is become familiar, was meekly replacing her disordered merchandize, when Lady Xerena, who had not before ventured once to lift her eyes from

her employment, hastily arose, and approaching the table, took from the box a plain gold clasp, observing, as she asked the price, that it was just the thing she wanted.

The eager eye of Orlando remarked, while the duchess and Lady Apolonia were examining and finding fault with her intended purchase, that she put into the young woman's hand triple the sum she had asked, saying, merely in a low voice, "The trifle over you may give your father," then repeating aloud that the trinket greatly pleased her, from being just the kind of clasp she wanted, she hurried back to her occupation, to prevent all expressions of gratitude from the cheered itinerant.

Orlando's looks first dwelt, with sympathetic emotion, on the hectic tint of joyful surprise which streaked the late palid cheek of the young pedlar, then following the direction of

her grateful eye, he fixed them on the tranquillized and beautiful countenance of Lady Xerena, who had calmly resumed her employment.

What volumes did this, apparently, trifling action, disclose to him of her benevolence of heart! It was not her charitable donation to the poor girl that so sensibly touched him. In that, he perceived nothing which any mind of common humanity (who had learnt her artless tale) would not have felt called upon to perform. It was the generous impulse which had prompted her to brave those taunts of the duchess and Lady Apolonia, from which he had often seen her shrink to soothe the mortification they had cruelly inflicted. It was the tenderness of nature which had led her to dissipate the poor girl's despondence at the wanton depreciation of property, on whose sale her only hope

depended, by chusing one of her trifles as worthy to be worn by herself, that affected so powerfully the sensitive Orlando.

Nor was this all.---The dutiful and scrupulous delicacy with which she had avoided the appearance of reproof to the duchess and Lady Apolonia, by pleading her own singularity in taste, as an *excuse* for differing from their's, and her constantly wearing the clasp ever since that morning, in proof that its having pleased her was her sole motive in the purchase, (seeking by this to hide the real feelings which had actuated her) only made him remember the whole transaction with more enthusiastic admiration.

It was this very clasp which Orlando had discovered glittering in the moon-beams on the turf, where it was probable Lady Xerena had, on that eventful morning, dropt it. He now, with

a tenderness scarcely less passionate than that which had, at the moment, hurried him into the conduct that had caused her since to shun him, secured this valuable memento of her he loved, then proceeding to her favorite willow, he deposited his flute at its root, where he doubted not she would on the next morning find it.

This idea rendered somewhat less bitter the sensations with which he bade a last adieu to scenes that he must no more revisit; yet, he lingered till the fleeting shades of night were giving place to the rising day. Then, remembering his promise to the marquis, he directed his reluctant steps towards the lodge, near which he was met by Fribourg, who informed him, that every thing was ready.

Orlando threw himself into the travelling carriage which awaited him, and was driven to Mr. Beresford's,

where he found the marquis awaiting him.

They reached town together on the same evening, and after passing one day there, accompanied Orlando's eldest brother down to Altringham Castle.

CHAP. IV.

THE three young men were received at the mansion of Sir Godfrey, with great demonstrations of joy; but the delight which Orlando had been accustomed to taste beneath the paternal roof was fled; those attentions he had till now received with so much grateful pleasure from his family, were in the present temper of his mind become insupportably importunate to him.

Incapable of long concealing the weight of despondence which oppressed him, he framed an excuse for hurrying back to Cambridge, some days before the vacation had expired; where in the solitude of his apart-

ments, and hidden from observation, he abandoned himself wholly to the regret---the sorrow---the various conjectures to which his situation naturally gave birth.

He believed himself entirely convinced that Lady Xerena now felt no other sentiment towards him, than cold displeasure at the presumptuous wishes in which he had not scrupled to avow he had been indulging; yet was he haunted by the vain desire of knowing in what way she had been affected by the testimony he had left behind him, of his deep despondence. He *believed* himself convinced, that he never more should be an invited guest of her mother; yet every letter the post brought him, he received with an agitated impatience which subsided into deeper gloom, on discovering it came not from her grace; whose theatrical friends, he imagined

must before this period have re-assembled at her mansion.

In this cruel state of mental suffering, week after week, in melancholy succession, rolled slowly on, leaving Orlando a prey to still increasing wretchedness.

Sometimes after wandering for hours on the banks of the Cam, he would throw himself on its margin, and closing his aching eyes, would give himself up to recollections connected with his ill-fated visit to the family of Castle-ossory.

On these occasions, a thousand little instances of sympathy or interests, which during that felicitous period he had experienced from Lady Xerena, would rush back on his memory and dissolve him into tenderness. Then as he was gradually led on to contrast his situation at that time with the present, he would sud-

denly relapse into all the torments of the wildest jealousy, at the belief that Lord Astenhall, or some other rival, had been appointed by the duchess to fill the character she had once assigned to him.

Had hope in reality entirely forsaken this unhappy young man, as he was persuaded it had long since done, his condition would have been far less pitiable. After the first paroxism of his disappointment, his mind would gradually have regained its native strength. It was the uncertainty of his situation which subdued it.

Incapable of engaging in any of his former pursuits---loathing those occupations in which he had once delighted---Orlando, in a frame of mind the most unfit for solitude, resolutely persisted in shunning all society: thus pertinaciously nourishing a malady, which already, in place of that healthy

bloom which had a few months before embellished his mild yet animated countenance, had now overspread it with a death-like paleness.

Sometimes he conceived so ardent a desire once more to behold Lady Xerena, that he half resolved on setting out instantly for the lodge. Yet this intention was ever checked by the recollection of the chilling reception he might probably experience from her, if regarded, which was but too likely, in the light of an unwelcome intruder.

Whenever this cruel idea presented itself to his imagination, his former wish became lost in the agony which assailed him, and he determined no earthly consideration should ever again induce him to expose himself to sufferings similar to those Lady Xerena had inflicted on him the last day he had ever passed beneath her mother's roof.

CHAP. V.

THREE months had thus rolled heavily away, and Orlando, far from evincing any desire of conquering a passion equally destructive to his health and happiness, seemed daily to resign himself more entirely to its baleful effects, when one evening he was suddenly roused from this lassitude into which he had now sunk, by a letter from the duchess of Castleossory, which ran thus---

LETTER.

“Hist! Romeo, hist!—O for a faulconer’s voice
To lure this tassel-gentle back again——.”
repeats your Juliet, daily.

“After many weeks of close confinement with my girls, at a wretched sea

bathing place, for the benefit (gravely asserts my physician) of exercising my philosophy, good Sir, I am once more, dear Orlando, restored to Snap-dragon Lodge and my friends, who render it agreeable to me.

“ My wish of seeing you amongst us, makes me fix on the twenty-second for your *debut*; we shall open with a great strength of talent. The celebrated Major Daventry, who you know has distinguished himself in the world of fashion by his *universal genius*, has lately, by mere chance, discovered ‘*qu'il a le grand talent pour le théâtre.*’ His Mercutio is said to be unrivalled; but we shall see: for he plays it here on the twenty-second.

“ Be sure that you are found at your post in time for our rehearsals, on pain of forfeiting your present claim to the favor of

GEORGINA CASTLE-OSSORY.”

Tumultuous was the rush of pleasure with which Orlando first perused this letter. *Hist! Romeo, hist!* as uttered by the tender voice of Lady Xerena, seemed again to strike on his bewildered sense, and he remained motionless, in the attitude of listening, as if afraid he might dissolve a spell which brought back once more the stranger, joy, to his long afflicted heart.

But these over-wrought emotions, by degrees, gave way to others less intemperate, though far more complicated. The confused sensation of extravagant pleasure which for some hours had agitated him, became more distinct and much alloyed.

He was going, an invited guest, to the mansion she inhabited---the indulgence for which he had so long languished---the privilege of once more contemplating her loved countenance

was permitted him; but of what sentiment towards himself could he hope to see that countenance expressive?

It was to be presumed Lady Xerena could not have taken any step to influence her grace against honoring him with this most welcome summons. Yet, to one who like Orlando loved, it was natural at times to apprehend that this dubious forbearance originated in the powerful auxiliary, she felt her pride would offer, to repress his further hopes; but did she not know the express purpose for which he was invited?---Did she not feel that, by the part assigned him, he would be sanctioned in addressing to her the language of impassioned love?---Was she not conscious that she would be called on to reply in strains by no means less tender?

As these reflections, and the hopes which they suggested, rushed impe-

tuously on the heart of Orlando, he again became fearfully agitated by the torrent of tumultuous rapture which assailed him.

In this sanguine state of mind did he commence his journey; but every mile which carried him nearer to the object of his interest witnessed the diminution of those lively hopes.

It was about nine o'clock on the second evening, that his carriage stopped at the portal of her grace's mansion. The tranquillity which had reigned there during his last visit, had now given place to noise and bustle. Newly arrived equipages, which had not yet moved off from the place where they had deposited their company---horses leading from the door, and domestics moving in every direction, seemed to have wrought a change in the aspect of the scene displeasing to the over-anxious and agitated Or-

lando; who, weak and languid from the effects of the mental suffering he had sustained since last he quitted it, and nearly overpowered by the idea of so soon being ushered into the presence of Lady Xerena, leaned awhile against a pillar of the portico to collect his failing strength.

He was, at length, recognised by a footman of the duchess, who led the way to the grand saloon, in which he said his lady and the greater part of the guests were assembled.

Orlando found the room brilliantly illuminated, and so crowded with company that he entered it unnoticed. A ring formed round her grace hid her from his sight, and feeling relieved at the prospect of being yet allowed some time to recover his scattered senses before he should be called on to perform a ceremony, for which he was at present so unequal, he

moved towards the other extremity of the apartment.

Large folding doors, at this end of the saloon, conducted to the music gallery.

They were now thrown open, and as Orlando drew nearer to the entrance, a female voice, accompanied by a harp, struck on his ear. It was the voice of Lady Xerena.

A sudden impulse, which he was incapable of controlling, made him dart forward to the arch-way; there, as suddenly stopping, his eager eyes fixed themselves on her whose image exclusively filled his thoughts.

On the right hand of her ladyship sat the Duke of Castle-ossory; on the left, stood a gentleman of elegant appearance. The former was making some awkward attempts to beat time to the music; the latter, evidently hung enamoured over the lovely performer.

Orlando, the pale statue of surprise, stood motionless a few paces only from the group, partly concealed from their observation by the open folding door; there, with breathless eagerness, he attended to the scene before him.

The song of Lady Xerena had ceased, and pleading a fatigue which her appearance seemed to testify was not feigned, she made an effort to quit the instrument; but the importunity of the stranger prevented her; for with the air of one unaccustomed to refusal, yet with perfect respect, he gently detained her at the harp, exclaiming as he did so, in a tone of earnest entreaty, " Nay, once again, dear Lady Xerena, but once——"

" Do oblige his lordship, my love," said the duke, " it can't hurt you to sing it once more, and really my Lord Astenhall has the reputation of being so much of an amateur, that though

no judge myself, I feel proud of the commendation he seems inclined to give you. Sing him his air once more, Xerena; I protest, though no judge, I begin to think it pretty myself."

My Lord Astenhall! ---his air! The words struck most serpent-like upon the very heart of the agitated Orlando.

Nearly overcome by the agonizing jealousy which now anew assailed him, he rested his throbbing temple against the door-way; Lady Xerena again began to sing, and her low and plaintive tones, with all their wonted power, soothed into greater calmness the perturbation of his mind.

He was still leaning, immovably regarding her, when an exclamation of surprise from the duchess (who had entered the music gallery by another door, and now first discovered him) gave a new turn to the scene.

"Is it possible that can be Orlando

Altringham!" said her grace, aloud, extending her hand to him with an air of graciousness, as he staggered a few steps towards her. "Pray, when did you arrive, Sir, and what is the reason that no one has informed me that you were here, and what, in the name of common sense, has happened to you since I last saw you?"

Her grace might probably have still further swelled the catalogue of her unanswered interrogatories, had not her attention, as well as that of every one else, been directed that moment to another object.

Lady Xerena, whose hands, relaxing from their hold, had suddenly sunk from her harp, and whose failing voice and palid countenance bore testimony that she was really ill, now rising from her seat, made an effort to quit the room; but, faltering, as if attacked by some sudden faintness, she would

have fallen at the duke's feet, had he not, by extending his arms, saved her.

Much confusion and alarm ensued. While his grace was overwhelming the duchess (who quitting Orlando, had hurried to her daughter's assistance) with advice and cautions, Lord Asten-hall poured forth, with much appearance of concern, many apologies and professions of regret for having, by his importunity, been instrumental in taxing Lady Xerena's indulgence beyond her strength.

The duchess, however, soon silenced them both by saying, authoritatively, "Well, well! don't make matters worse by persecuting the poor girl any further. I told you she was not well, but his grace, who never yet would hear reason——."

Here she paused, and cast on the subject of her animadversion a look of infinite bitterness, then leading Lady

Xerena towards the door, she said to Lord Astenhall, who was anxiously following them, "not one step further, if you would not incur my serious displeasure; but go and tell Apolonia, who is in the saloon, and will be terrified to death at the idea that something very shocking has happened, that it is merely the heat of the room which has overcome her sister."

His lordship lingered till the ladies had disappeared, and then, with an air of reluctance, went to obey her grace's commands.

A few minutes only had elapsed when the duchess returned to the gallery, satisfied the inquiries of the party in general, by saying she had left Lady Xerena better, and then took her place beside the bewildered Orlando, to whom she seemed desirous of giving vent to her vexation, by complaining of the countenance and

encouragement the duke had provokingly given Lord Astenhall, to torment Lady Xerena without mercy the whole day.

The manner of her grace, the anger which darted from her fine eyes, and the cutting severity of her expressions, might have tempted any one who entertained the opinion of her views, which Mr. Westerley had avowed, that her ill-humour towards the duke originated in her disappointment that Lord Astenhall's attentions had not been elsewhere paid. Orlando's mind, however, was then capable of only two sensations :---tender regret at the indisposition of Lady Xerena, and new-born hope at finding that the assiduities of Lord Astenhall had been felt, by her, importunate.

Before the duchess quitted him; which she did, not long after, to form a card party, she invited him to break-

fast, tete-a-tete, with her on the following morning, precisely at twelve o'clock, and the rest of the evening was passed by Orlando in a restlessness and confusion of mind, that disqualified him for taking any part in the amusements of those by whom he was surrounded.

CHAP. VI.

IT was exactly at the hour appointed by her grace that Orlando, on the next morning, entered her dressing room. The intervening hours had done nothing towards calming the anxieties which disturbed him. After a sleepless night he had risen, at the first peep of dawn, and had incessantly, but vainly, watched for some attendant capable of giving him tidings of Lady Xerena, who had not quitted her room at the time he went to join the duchess.

The duke, after taking an early breakfast with Lord Astenhall, had set off with him in his travelling carriage, for the purpose, as it was under-

ootsd, of transacting some business of importance in which they were mutually interested ; and it was given out that they would be absent during several days, a circumstance which afforded Orlando considerable relief.

Yet what had he to expect during that interval ? To what end had the duchess invited him to her dressing-room, once the theatre of so much delight?---Was he now about to meet Lady Xerena there ?---Was it to renew their former occupations that he was summoned ?

These doubts were still powerfully agitating him when he proceeded to the appointed meeting.

Orlando found her grace alone, and expecting him with a countenance from whence all traces had disappeared of the haughtiness and anger that, when speaking of the duke on the preceding evening, had so strongly shaded

it. It was now expressive only of good humour, mixed with a certain playful archness, which seemed to threaten some meditated mischief.

"Why Romeo!" exclaimed the lady, in a sportive tone, after she had awhile regarded his altered countenance and emaciated person, "since last I saw thee here

'Hast thou been bound more than a madman is,
Shut up in prison, kept without thy food,
Whipt and tormented?

"But, in good sooth, what evil hath befallen thee?"

There was something of mockery in the duchess's manner, which greatly disconcerted Orlando, who, while obeying her signal to place himself beside her, replied, with hesitation, that he had of late been somewhat indisposed, but already began to experience the good effects of change of air.

"Why, that is well, observed her grace, with increasing archness, "so in good time I trust you will become *yourself again*.---Yet, you must excuse my remarking, that when I nominated you to undertake the part of Romeo, on my night of nights, me thought you were 'a marvellous proper man;' but now!---go view thyself, I pray, in yonder mirror, and then say, truly, if you are at present qualified to represent a more engaging personage than Shakespear's lean apothecary.

'———Meagre in his looks,
Sharp misery has worn him to the bones!'

"You have no particular objection to the change, I hope."

"Your raillery is a little cruel," replied Orlando, endeavouring to smite, "yet it leads me to hope——."

"Don't let it lead you to hope," interrupted her grace, "since, from

the aspect of affairs, it seems very likely to terminate in disappointment."

"Disappointment!" echoed the alarmed Orlando, fixing on her face his interrogating eyes, "disappointment, madam!"

"To say the truth," pursued her grace, not appearing conscious of his exclamation, "I cannot altogether blame Xerena; nay, I think you must be conscious that sufficient reason exists for her declining to perform a part——."

Her grace's speech was here suddenly interrupted by her distressed auditor, who now believing his most cruel fears confirmed, with a feeling of desperation which defied the worst, addressed to her a rapid, incoherent, and impassioned confession of his former madness and presumption, of the misery Lady Xerena's subsequent rigour and his own repentance had in-

flicted on him, ending with a declaration that he would immediately quit the lodge, and remove from her sight an object evidently become hateful to her.

“What is the meaning of all these heroics?” demanded the duchess, with a look of extreme severity, “pray, Sir, resume your senses, nor attempt to quit my presence till you have satisfied me as to the extent of those dishonorable practices which, from your own confession, it appears you have ventured to carry on beneath my roof. Possessed of my permission to act the part of a feigned lover to Lady Xerena Elmeron, if I understand you rightly, you have dared to assume the language of a real one.”

It was in a tone of cutting reproach that, after a moment’s pause, her grace continued---

“And now, *ingenuous* Sir, let us ex-

amine the feeling which has prompted this tardy avowal of your most treasonable duplicity---Proceeds it from any ‘compunctuous visitings,’ at having betrayed my confidence?---Oh no, had not Xerena discountenanced your temerity, her mother would not have been the chosen confidante of your ill-founded hopes.”

“Madam,” replied Orlando, speaking with difficulty, “those hopes are fled: the sense of incurable regret which they have planted here, alone remains. Allow me to depart, and at a distance expiate the error into which——.”

“No, Sir, interrupted the lady, impatiently, “I will not consent to your departure till I have first probed you to the very quick: for I have strong suspicions that eyen now you have confessed no more than half the injury your rash intemperance has done me. You say you love Xerena; how know

you but that your passion is requited ? Nay, start not, should it be so, can you believe you will expiate your fault to me by leaving her a prey to pining sorrow ? ”

“ Madam,” exclaimed Orlando, with passionate earnestness, “ in pity, trifle not with my sufferings.”

“ You may, at a distance from Xerena,” pursued her grace, without noticing this appeal, “ philosophize and take comfort to your heroic bosom ; but can that recompense me for your having alienated her attachment from her duty ? --- Can that reconcile me to see her vainly seeking to combat the affection you have kindled ? ”

While the duchess thus addressed Orlando, his eyes continued fixed on her face, with the intense eagerness of one who endeavours to penetrate the inmost recesses of the soul. Presently he perceived the severity which had

clouded her brow suddenly disappear, giving place to the same playful expression with which she had first received him.

"Tranquillize thyself, poor youth," at length she said, smiling graciously on him, "and confess that you have deserved the pain I have been inflicting; yet you may look on me, Orlando, as an indulgent friend, and one so partial, that though I well know the duke of Castle-ossory will never voluntarily bestow his daughter on you, I pledge myself to use my best exertions for your happiness. Remember," added she, emphatically, "if you *deserve* her, Xerena shall be your's: for never will I submit to have my power limited by a man whom I despise."

As her grace uttered these last words, her eyes flashed fire, and her features took that expression of terrific bitterness which Mr. Westerly had so

ably described as characterizing all her matrimonial contests with her lord. It was in the present instance, however, evanescent, and in the next minute was succeeded by all her former sportive graciousness, as checking the extravagance of Orlando's joy, she said---

" Nay, nay, reserve, I pray you, these agreeable heroics for the gratification of thy little traitoress, who, to say the truth has, for the honor of her sex, very ably performed her part, considering what a mere novice she is in such affairs; but thou, Orlando, art a sad simpleton! a very child of nature, born only yesterday! Why, man! if thou hadst had one spark of vanity, one grain of worldly experience, instead of being downcast, thou wouldest have discovered thine own triumph in the flight of thy too timid nymph---in her fears of thee---her conscious weak-

ness, and thine own power---in her persevering avoidance---affection warring with her sense of duty ; but go to, thy passion is requited."

Orlando, now in an agitation which for some time held her grace suspended, attempted, in broken sentences, to express the joy and gratitude with which his heart was overcharged. When the first wild ebullitions had subsided, she informed him that it was from observation alone she had built her conjecture, that he had touched the heart of Lady Xerena. " We will, however, put my judgment to the test," said her grace, pulling the bell-string, and in the next minute ordering the domestic who answered it to inform Lady Xerena that she wished to see her in her dressing-room.

The short interval which succeeded was passed in unbroken silence. Orlando, on the closing of the door,

walked to a distant window, and while his unconscious eye was fixed on the picturesque landscape it commanded, her grace seemed collecting herself for the approaching interview.

Lady Xerena, little suspecting the kind of reception which awaited her, quitting her apartment for the first time that morning, obeyed her mother's summons.

" My good girl," said her grace, as soon as she perceived her, " I am charmed to see that you are so well recovered from your last evening's *fatigue*, for I want to consult you on a matter which has thrown me into some perplexity. Pray have you seen Orlando Altringham since his arrival ?

" No---y---es---scarcely, madam," replied Lady Xerena, faintly.

" Then if that be the case, I must have been mistaken, my dear," replied the duchess; " but do you know, the

strangest idea imaginable took possession of my brain last night; shall I tell you what it was, Xerena?---O, you would rather not hear it, I see; well, then we will proceed at once to the subject I want to consult you about; and yet they are so singularly connected, I believe my dear I must after all tell you what I had taken into my head. It struck me, that the real cause of your *megrims*, or what ever it was which so disconcerted us all, was occasioned by the unexpected sight_____. You need not look so alarmed, Xerena, it is only a very foolish fancy of my own that I am going to tell you; but although I expected Orlando Altringham, I was myself so much surprised at his spectre-like appearance, that I naturally enough conceived you, who did not know he was coming, might have been overset by it, particularly, as the

change must have been more striking from your having, the moment before, withdrawn your eyes from the florid countenance of Lord Astenhall. Now, it appeared to me, that the moment *his* pale visage caught your attention, you looked as if you had received a sudden shock, which occasioned that *mal-a-propos* desertion of your presence of mind which threw every body into so much confusion.---As, however, you tell me that you have scarcely seen Orlando, this must have been all an idle notion of my own. Now, to say the truth, I have conceived some interest for the young man, and therefore have been since led to examine him very attentively. The result is a full persuasion that he is not in a state of health to sustain his part on the twenty-second. He is scarcely the shadow of what he lately was. In short," pursued her grace, heaving a

long drawn sigh, “the poor young man is certainly too far gone.”

“Heaven in its mercy forbid!” exclaimed the alarmed Lady Xerena, thrown entirely off her guard by the image of Orlando’s danger, which the melancholy cadence of her mother and her sudden pause was intended to convey.

“Yes, my dear,” resumed her grace, with well preserved gravity, “Orlando Altringham is too certainly ---far gone---in love!”

The bloom which compassionate apprehension had a momont before banished from the cheek of Lady Xerena, now impetuously returned to overspread it with a ten-fold deeper die, as the altered tone and now smiling looks of her mother at once banished her alarm, and convinced her she had betrayed herself.

The scene which followed was one

of mixed emotions. Orlando, of whose presence Lady Xerena had not before been conscious, trembling and disordered, rushed forward to throw himself at her feet; while, starting from her seat in confusion and amazement, she glanced eagerly from her lover to the duchess, and from the duchess to her lover, as if entreating of them an explanation of what appeared to her a mere illusion.

The duchess for some time seemed to find pleasure in contemplating her perplexity; at length, taking the hand of her bewildered daughter, she led her to a seat beside her, and making Orlando place himself on the other, she thus addressed them, with much solemnity:

“ I perceive that you are, as yet, both doubtful of my performing the engagement to which I again pledge myself---that of uniting you; for I

have long known that you love each other. Attend to my own early history, you may discover in it sufficient motives for my conduct, which will to the world appear extraordinary.

" You are both already aware that, at an age scarcely past childhood, I was married to the (then) Marquis of Cinquefoil; but what you are not aware of is, that young as I was, my faith and best affections had been given to another.

" An only child, and heiress to considerable wealth, I had always been treated in my father's house with that species of indulgence which prematurely forms the woman; and while yet a school-girl, I began to languish for emancipation from restraint, for flattery, and homage.

" In this temper of mind I was removed from the seminary at which I had passed some discontented years,

to one near town, of the description supposed to give the finishing polish to young ladies, where my time would still have hung most heavily on my hands, but for an event scarcely less expected than at that time delightful.

“ I became acquainted with St. Ormond, a youth exactly calculated to fascinate the heart of such a girl as I then was. Though more than eighteen himself, he had not been removed from the academy at which he had received his education, which academy was situated scarcely an hundred yards from the entrance of my new abode.

“ I will not attempt to detail to you how suddenly we fell in love the very first time we met in our accustomed walks---the means through which he made known his passion---the poetic epistles he thenceforth daily addressed to me, his Laura---the delight with which I perused and answered them.

---the stratagem by which we regularly effected the interchange of our letters. These, and many other et-ceteras, though vastly important to us at that time, having nothing to do with the leading object of my history, I shall pass over, to arrive at the epoch of my leaving school, a crisis most alarming to my apprehensive lover, who was like you, Orlando, a younger brother.

" St. Ormond was descended from an honorable family, but with no other pretensions to offer my ambitious father (except a superabundance of love) for presuming to demand his daughter of him. To venture on this step was, we both too well knew, not only to ensure a rejection, but his certain banishment; and was therefore not to be thought of.

" A circumstance, quite unforeseen by my lover, occurred about that time

which he then thought a miracle of good fortune, an augury of an happy termination to his hopes.---Poor St. Ormond! but I will not anticipate thy wrongs!

“ He was removed to Oxford, which being no more than a few miles from my father’s principal seat, enabled us to see each other frequently, and we passed the intervals between our meetings in an epistolary intercourse.

“ I believe,” remarked the duchess, “ there is no more certain means of cherishing a juvenile attachment than such a species of communication; because the mind, softened by absence in addressing the object of its interest, naturally gives the reins to imagination, and attributes to its idol I know not what of ideal perfections! These he so often paints, and with so much warmth of colouring, that in the end he believes them real.---At least, so

I am well persuaded it was with poor St. Ormond, who certainly delighted me with very charming portraits of his mistress!---portraits which I contemplated with infinite complacency, though I knew them to be very *flattering* likenesses.

“Thus matters stood between us, when a luckless music meeting at Oxford, carried me thither with a lady, to whose care my father had intrusted me. It was on that ill-fated occasion that, for the first time, I was seen by the Marquis of Cinquefoil.

“But I can never submit,” broke off the duchess, impatiently, “to relate the circumstances which led me to violate my promises, my solemn vows, plighted to St. Ormond, never to wed but him, and link myself to a man, whom I even then disliked, whom I soon learnt to hate! Ambition, vanity, parental influence, and

fraud, all were combined to effect this monstrous sacrifice.

"I had been some time married before I discovered the artifice which had wrought me to betray St. Ormond. Judge, Orlando, with what feelings I learnt, after having irrevocably bound myself to the marquis, whom I till then believed ignorant of my attachment to that unhappy youth, that he knew it from our first acquaintance---knew it, and connived at the deception which separated me from him for ever---knew it, yet took to his arms a woman whose heart he was certain had long been devoted to another!---but I have taught him to repent his baseness---yes, St. Ormond! I have revenged thy wrongs."

There was in the tone, the gestures, and the countenance of the duchess, while touching on this part of her narrative, a frightful vehemence corre-

spondent to her words, which kept her auditors silent during the few minutes she paused to regain her self-command. When she again addressed them, it was in a subdued voice.

“ I was not always the violent, the perverse spirit,” said she, “ which an ill assorted match has made me; but no matter. Let my history serve you, Xerena, as a useful lesson. Neither rank, nor boundless wealth have been sufficient to secure me from a life of bitterness and repining. My dishonorably acquired title, which in the eyes of others exalted me above my former self, in those of the injured St. Ormond, reduced me to an object of regret and pity. I have never encountered him but once since my ill-omened marriage. The impression of the cold and scornful look with which he measured me, was indelibly imprinted here for my perpetual punishment,” said

the duchess, pressing her hand upon her heart.

"I loved St. Ormond," she continued, "and he might have moulded me to his pleasure. I have never discovered in any character but your's, Orlando, the same union of talents and enthusiasm, candour and simplicity, as he possessed.

"It was this striking resemblance to what I first knew him, that originally interested me in your favor. I found amusement in perusing more closely the pleasing analogy, and in doing so discovered, before you were yourself conscious of it, your growing attachment to Xerena.

"Till the illness, which was so near consigning to rest my long vexed and discontented spirit, I knew not half the merits of this girl; and while I afterwards watched the progress of your efforts to win her affections, I resolved

that no tyrannical exertion of parental authority should ever interfere to separate you if you succeeded.

" Xerena, with a heart not less susceptible than mine, has acted with a discretion of which I was myself incapable at her age; yet has she not been able to conceal from my scrutiny what your separation has cost her, nor the feeling of repugnance with which she yesterday shrunk from the importunate attentions of Lord Astenhall.

" All this leads me to a conclusion in which, if I have erred, I call on you to set me right. Xerena, I believe that were his lordship possessed of ten-fold wealth and honors, to tender you himself and them while this poor youth, in opposition to his high pretensions, offered no better claims than those which won your first affection, you would not a moment hesitate on which to fix your choice. Rejecting

the ostentatious splendor of Lord Astenhall, you would seek your happiness in restoring to Orlando that peace of which you have deprived him. You would feel a dearer triumph in perceiving, at your bidding, health and joy again steal back to his once tranquil features, than equipages, jewels, flattery, or dresses could afford you. If I am right in this conjecture, give me your hand in token of assent."

While the duchess pronounced these last sentences, Lady Xerena had timidly raised her eyes to the altered countenance of Orlando, then touched to the soul at the change she there beheld, and gathering courage from those evidences of his attachment, without a moment's hesitation she presented her mother with the assenting symbol she had demanded of her.

"Now," said her grace, receiving it with an air of satisfaction, and again

checking the overflow of gratitude which was bursting from the lips of the agitated lover, "Now, Orlando, attend to what I have to urge to you.---Did I not believe that in disinterestedness, as well as in love, you resemble my St. Ormond, never would I consent to bestow Xerena on you. *He* would joyfully have renounced all hope of future wealth to have secured the object of his passion.---*He* would have taken me portionless rather than have risked my loss. Often has he wished me born to poverty, and of a family that might receive, not confer, honor by his alliance. Often has he passionately urged me to a secret marriage, which, too probably, I should irreconcilably have offended my father, and consequently have forfeited the inheritance of his fortune. Just such as St. Ormond then was, I now believe you to be---loving Xerena, for *herself*,

with an affection so pure, that could she, by some miracle, be suddenly stripped of rank, of wealth, of all that now places her above you, you would, with equal eagerness, in the face of Heaven and of the world, unite your fate with her's. Am I right, Orlando? ---would you, so circumstanced, do this?"

"I would, so prosper all my hopes of happiness!" cried Orlando, with solemn fervor.

"Take her, then," said the duchess, joining their hands, "thus I bestow her on you, and once again pledge myself to both to effect your union. A moment yet, and I have done. The task I have assigned myself of silencing the duke's opposition is one of difficulty; but my word is passed, and never shall it, for St. Ormond's sake, be a second time forfeited."

As soon as her grace had uttered

these words, - she precipitately quitted the apartment, leaving the lovers to the uninterrupted enjoyment of those new visions of happiness into which the scene that had just taken place was calculated to lull them.

CHAP. VII.

THE three following days were days of happiness to Orlando and Lady Xerena. During that period, her ladyship was drawn in to acknowledge much of what she had herself felt since the moment of Mr. Boston's unseasonable intrusion on them in the grounds, from whence it became manifest to her lover that he had not at that time misconstrued the emotion of which her conduct had been expressive.

The interruption, however, had afforded her leisure for the recollection which was necessary to impress her with the impropriety of countenancing hopes which she then thought could

never be sanctioned by either of her parents.

Earnestly desirous of profiting from the reflections to which she had been awakened during her walk home, yet roused to a full consciousness of the empire Orlando had acquired over her affections, Lady Xerena saw no certainty of shunning the danger of betraying those sentiments which might hurry them into a clandestine, and she feared hopeless engagement, but in flight.

Yet the effort had cost her much, and the remainder of the day and the succeeding night had scarcely been passed in greater wretchedness by Orlando than herself. Like his, it had been one of restless inquietude, which rendered her watchful of every sound that seemed the forerunner of his departure.

Before the day had scarcely dawned,

she heard the roll of carriage wheels beneath her window, and then the voice of Fribourg, impatiently inquiring for Mr. Altringham, alleging that he had been vainly searching for him in his room.

While he yet continued, arrogantly, to swear and scold at David, as if *he* had been instrumental in the disappearance of Orlando, that youth was discovered by another domestic crossing the lawn on his return from his melancholy walk. Fribourg immediately went to meet and hurry him, and Lady Xerena still distinguished his but half intelligible jargon, as they arrived together soon after at the door of the vehicle in waiting; when she recognized the sound of the letting down of carriage steps. Her heart beat quicker at that moment, as the tones of Orlando's voice, in low and mournful cadence, struck on her

ready ear. It merely uttered, "It is no matter." In the next moment the carriage door was shut with a loud report, and it drove rapidly away.

As its receding roll convinced her that Orlando was actually gone, that to see him once more was no longer within her power, she was seized with an almost insupportable sense of regret that she had suffered those moments profitlessly to escape her, while it had been yet within her choice to have bade him a last adieu.

Now, entirely losing sight of the considerations which then influenced her, she grieved at the remembrance that he must have left the lodge impressed with the belief that she was undeserving the tenderness with which she had inspired him---that she had shewn herself alike insensible and careless of the regard he had unadvisedly been hurried into betraying;

that she had unfeelingly added slight to the rejection with which she had found herself called upon to meet his avowal of preference.

As, after these painful ideas had crowded on her imagination, she recalled the character of Orlando : his sensibility, his candour, his gentleness of nature, she felt a sentiment of hatred against herself for the selfishness that had led her into adding mortification to the disappointment she had been called upon to inflict on him ; and she repented that she had not softened his regret by allowing him to penetrate the sentiment of affection with which, hopeless as she believed it, her own bosom was filled.

It was in this temper of mind that Lady Xerena, soon after sun-rise, set out on her accustomed walk, and spontaneously bent her steps towards that spot on which Orlando had last

addressed her. He was now no longer there, she was under no necessity of continuing to confine herself to her chamber to avoid him; he was no longer there---no more could she encounter him in her path.

The heaviness of heart which had before oppressed her became less supportable as these reflections were pressed upon her remembrance by passing several of the places on which they had at various times unexpectedly met. The delight with which the benevolent countenance of Orlando had been on these occasions suddenly illumined, now returned on her recollection only to make her feel, with added poignancy, remorse at the sorrow and disappointment with which she had now too probably clouded it.

Such were the feelings with which she had approached the willow, at whose foot he had deposited his votive

offering. Lady Xerena instantly discovered it, and perused, with accumulated regret and tenderness, the romantic effusion in which it was enveloped.

From this period, though the difference of her situation and greater self controul had not admitted of her yielding to that total abandonment to grief in which her lover had indulged, her thoughts and her affections became daily more entirely devoted to his memory, and they were nourished by the constant uncertainty and apprehension in which she remained respecting his situation.

It was not long after Orlando's return to Cambridge, that the duchess had been recommended to try the effect of sea bathing and perfect retirement on her greatly debilitated constitution. To the watering place fixed on for her temporary abode, both her

daughters accompanied her. A change of scene, however, effected nothing towards irradicating the attachment with which Orlando had inspired Lady Xerena.

During the many weeks they had been absent from the lodge, she had never received one syllable of intelligence respecting him ; so that when her grace (greatly amended in health, and in a high flow of spirits) had returned with Lady Apolonia and herself, she had carried back with her the same weight of restless anxiety with which she had originally set out on their journey.

The duchess had been at Snapdragon Lodge but a few days when she addressed to Orlando the characteristic letter which at once roused him from the state of supine dejection into which he had been long sunk, and carried him back to her grace,

who had studiously avoided acquainting Lady Xerena with this invitation. Nothing, therefore, could have been more unexpected than his sudden appearance before her.

The duke had that very morning accompanied Lord Astenhall down to his family, under colour of congratulating his duchess on her restoration to health; but in reality, it was with a view to facilitate the accomplishment of an object which each nobleman had now much at heart.

His lordship, who had passed a short time at the same bathing place as the duchess, had twice seen Lady Xerena during the daily visits he paid her mother, and becoming still more captivated by her attractions, and convinced that he could never obtain her grace's interest with her younger daughter, (who was evidently laboring to attach him to her elder) set

off for town, and desperately applied to the duke for his interference, a favor he was promised with undisguised pleasure:

Few events could have been more agreeable to his grace than the prospect of such an establishment for Lady Xerena, as besides that, it would in future secure to him the privilege of enjoying the society of his favorite child, without being obliged to submit to those irksome restrictions with which the duchess had ever clogged this gratification, he must by this alliance considerably strengthen his own political influence.

Perfectly agreed in the desire of speedily accomplishing the projected union, it was settled between these noblemen that before encountering the opposition which they were both prepared to experience from her grace, they should take a trip to a distant

seat of Lord Astenhall's, for the purpose of transacting some affairs (in which his lordship was nearly interested) that he was desirous of terminating before his marriage, and as they were obliged to pass the lodge in their way thither, they could not refrain from stopping one day at that mansion just to indulge themselves with a sight of Lady Xerena.

It was not probable that the business which on the following morning was to carry them away again, would detain them more than a few days, after which they were to return immediately to the lodge, and lay before her grace the ultimate arrangements which had taken place between them; arrangements which the duke repeatedly asserted to Lord Astenhall no opposition from her, however violent, should induce him to alter or retard the completion of. That a decided

repugnance on the part of *any* young lady to accept of *him* and his possessions might throw a formidable difficulty in his way, was as entirely unsuspected by his lordship as was her grace's *counterplot* by the duke, who, ignorant that she was perfectly well apprised of every step Lord Astenhall and himself had taken in the affair, imagined her entirely unconscious of the disagreeable surprise which awaited her when next they met.

The fact however was, that a trusty confidant of the duchess, who, by living in their town mansion, usually kept her well acquainted with all the proceedings of the duke, had lost no time in informing her of the proposals of his lordship for her younger daughter; and it was this very information which had hastened the summons she in the very same hour dispatched to Orlando, whom she well knew she

could make the innocent instrument of her reprisals on both these noblemen.

Lady Xerena, without exactly knowing Lord Astenhall's pretensions to her favor, had been distressed and made thoroughly uneasy by his particular attentions during the day, and the encouragement given him by the duke; she had, therefore, seen him from her window, on the following morning, depart from the lodge with a feeling of much satisfaction.

This temporary relief, however, soon again yielded to the doubts and perplexities in which she had passed the night, and to an irresolution respecting the way in which she ought to meet Orlando, that prevented her from quitting her chamber till the duchess's summons led at once to the termination of all her scruples, and restored the lovers to the same delight-

ful intercourse in which they had before passed so many happy hours.

Sweetly did the intervening period glide on between this eventful morning and that day which was to usher in her grace's *night of nights*, as she called that of the re-opening her theatre with two *debutants*, of whom very extraordinary expectations were formed. The celebrated Major Daventry, and Orlando Altringham, which latter was cut out on purpose by nature, as the duchess repeatedly asserted before her guests, to perform the part of the enamoured and enchanting Romeo to perfection.

CHAP. VIII.

THE final preparations were completed--the last rehearsal was gone through---Mr. Westerly, full of significant smiles and shrugs, and inuendos, had given those, who well knew him, to understand that something extraordinary might be looked for, and the numerous company were on the tip-toe of expectation, when (soon after Orlando and Lady Xerena, gliding out of the saloon, had strolled together to one of their favorite haunts) a carriage, covered with dust, and drawn by steeds, whose smoking sides proclaimed the rapidity with which they had been driven, stopped before the grand entrance of the lodge, and in the next

moment the Duke of Castle-ossory and Lord Astenhall issued from it.

"How infinitely obliging, my lords, is this!" exclaimed her grace to those noblemen, as soon as they had made their appearance in the apartment where she was sitting, surrounded by her guests. "How singularly flattering and attentive I feel the honor you do me, in thus making a point of gracing my evening theatricals with your company."

The lady smiled and bowed, as she uttered this, with an air of parading courtesy; yet her tone was one of pointed irony, and the glance of her eye flashed scornful exultation.

The duke, disconcerted, in spite of his better resolutions, by a reception which made him instantly and irresistibly feel all that power to whose absolute rule he had for so many years resigned himself, now turned to Lord

Astenhall, in the hope of catching from him some spark of spirit from which he might relumine his own expiring courage, just as his lordship, piqued at the exulting air of the lady, replied carelessly,

“ Your grace is really too generous in attributing our intrusive visit to no more treasonable a motive than that of enjoying your tragedy. If, however, we do not *interrupt* it, I shall feel that we are entitled to your pardon for venturing to acknowledge that Melpomene is not the heroine who has at this time drawn us hither.”

“ Perhaps,” retorted the duchess, with an affected laugh, “ your lordship has it in contemplation to supersede my tragedy by some *melo-drame*, in which his grace and your lordship propose taking principal parts; if so, *je suis à vous.*”

“ Madam,” said the duke, who now

beginning to recover from the disagreeable effect of her grace's reception, felt himself once more a man of courage, "may I beg the favor of half an hour's private audience with you in your dressing-room?"

"Your grace too well knows you may *command* it," replied the lady, (rising with an air of mock submission), "so, exit the meek duchess of Castle-ossory, followed by the imperious duke."

"Pray now, my lord," said her grace, as soon as they were seated tete-a-tete, make me acquainted, without any circumlocution, with the mighty matter to which I am indebted for the extraordinary honor I am at this moment enjoying. You know my constitutional aversion to all species of prosing, particularly on *fid fad* subjects."

"Madam," replied his grace, in a

tone which he intended should be impressively authoritative, "as the affair I am about to open to you involves no less a consideration than the establishment of my younger daughter, Lady Xerena Elmeron, I shall waive making any apology for entering pretty largely into the details of the intended marriage settlements, and the several arrangements irrevocably concluded between my Lord Astenhall and myself. As to the insisting on the provisional settlement for a separate maintenance, which our lawyers are at present canvassing, I leave that point to be decided between you and them, having myself no particular cause of predilection for those kind of provisions which render the wife independent of the husband."

"Wife---husband---my Lord Astenhall---Xerena---marriage settlements, and separate maintenances!" echoed

her grace, with a well acted start, and look of astonishment. "Am I dreaming, or has your grace lost your senses?"

"Neither madam," replied the duke, with increasing spirit; "On the contrary I have very lately recovered them, and I am happy to see you are sufficiently awake to be made fully sensible that they are at last in my own possession. You have too long, madam, usurped an undue authority in matters which concern me as nearly as yourself. Even in the management of my own children, you have denied me a voice. In vain have I repeatedly and earnestly remonstrated with you on the subject, and of late, on your obstinately withholding from Lady Xerena, the same advantages you gave her sister, long before her age. I mean, the introducing her into the world. You must remember, madam, as long as four months ago, I

signified to you that if you persisted, after your recovery, in your very extraordinary refusal to comply with my wishes in this particular, I should take wholly on myself the task of having my daughter presented before the next birth-day. I protest at that time, I had no foresight of the very unexceptionable establishment, which, in the interim, has been offered for her, by my lord Astenhall; the securing which, will of course, in future, place every thing on a proper footing; and at the same time, insure to me a very considerable accession of political interest; by attaching his lordship to my measures, by means of this bond of family union. So entirely, madam, does this alliance meet my wishes, and so decidedly have I made up my mind, on the subject of closing with lord Astenhall's liberal proposals, that having now gradually smoothed the way,

I come at once, madam, to the principal object, of this conference. This object is to state to your grace, with perfect fairness and candour, that it is my unalterable resolution to take lady Xerena back with me to town, and to have her presented at the next drawing room. I shall esteem myself beholden to you, madam, if you will do me the favor of acting a mother's part on this occasion; but I hold it my bounden duty, to state to you at the same time, that, your non-compliance will make no change in my arrangements. My aunt, lady Fitzosborne Altringham, (who is fortunately at present with her grandson in St. James's Square) will undertake that office, I have no doubt; and also assist at the marriage ceremony, which I stand pledged to my lord Astenhall, shall not be delayed a single day after the settlements are ready. And now, madam,

having clearly and distinctly laid my views, my wishes, and my determinations before you; and thanked you for the patient hearing, with which you have honored me, I await your grace's answer."

At the very commencement of this harangue, the duchess had humorously thrown herself into the attitude of a fine statue of Angerona* which decorated her dressing room; covering her mouth as that goddess is represented, by way of denoting her forbearance from complaint. It was thus, and with a look of corresponding gentleness, that she listened to the duke, without making one effort to interrupt a speech, which he uttered with great appearance of self-complacency. When, at its close, he paused for a reply, the lady, in a tone, meek as that which might have been ex-

* The Goddess of silence and calmness of mind.

pected to have issued from the goddess herself (supposing she had ever been induced to deviate from her characteristic taciturnity) thus addressed him:

"I have often lamented, my lord, the strong evidences of the imbecility and imperfection of poor human nature, which have been occasionally exhibited by princes the most potent, ministers of the highest reputation, and senators of the first dignity and consideration! These mighty men, suffering themselves to be hurried away by pride, or passion, or prejudice, or avarice, in their over eagerness, to grasp at some coveted object, have been betrayed into wofully miscalculating the difficulty, not to say impossibility, of their ever obtaining it. What have been the consequences, which have resulted to them? Shame and disappointment. I have been led

into generalizing this remark, with a view, *gradually to smooth the way*, before I risk afflicting your lordship, by the observation, that, with all your legislative sagacity, you seem to have overlooked the existing obstacles, to your ever securing that *accession of political influence by means of your projected bond of family union*, on which you have been as weakly building, as if his lordship were already your son-in-law. Now my lord," pursued her grace, (suddenly breaking from her tone of gentle irony into one so loud and imperious, as to make the duke start) "Now, my lord, attend to the sibyl's prophecy, lord Astenhall *never* shall become your son-in-law, by the completion of this forbidden marriage."

"And who, madam, possesses the power to forbid it?" demanded the duke, trembling between fear and anger.

"That have *I*," replied her grace, in a still louder key; "and be assured I will effectually exert it. My lord;" continued the duchess, moderating her voice and gestures; "it is not to my lord Astenhall that I object; attach him to your family by means of Apolonia, and I promise you my hearty concurrence.---The girl loves him."

"I am very sorry to hear it;" replied the duke abruptly. "I very much disapprove of young ladies volunteering their affections, and as my lord Astenhall has fixed his fancy on her sister, the sooner you inform her that her case is hopeless the better."

"Will your lordship while I am so busily employed, have the charity to perform the same kind office towards your son-in-law elect;" demanded her grace sarcastically; "you may with equal truth acquaint him, that

Xerena having *fixed her fancy* on another, his own case is still more hopeless; because she has actually engaged her hand to the object of her preference."

" 'Tis false, madam," cried the duke, starting from his seat, half frantic with rage and apprehension. " I challenge you to prove so infamous an assertion."

" If there should be found any infamy attachable to her lover," retorted the lady, with an air of the most provoking carelessness, " I will venture to assert, he derives it from your grace's family, to which he is nearly allied; but so far am I from entertaining the least ill opinion of Orlando Altringham, that I esteem him in every respect worthy the affection with which he has inspired Xerena. I have, therefore, sanctioned the engagement which has taken place be-

tween them, and have undertaken to silence all opposition on the part of your grace, to their marriage."

While the duchess thus spoke, the duke rang the bell violently, and ordered the footman who answered it to send lady Xerena's woman to him immediately; and to inform her ladyship that he was impatiently expecting to see her. Then, turning to the duchess, he said in a tone of extreme perturbation, "you have over-rated your power, madam, in flattering yourself you could silence my opposition to a marriage, preposterous---unequal---and disgraceful. What, madam, have you presumed to believe me so very a slave to your caprices, that you could arrogantly silence my opposition to your giving my daughter---my favorite child---my darling Xerena, to the portionless, insignificant younger brother of a very remote branch of my family?"

"Jenkinson," said his grace, turning to the woman, who at that moment, in obedience to his summons, had attended to learn his commands.

"Jenkinson, get your young lady's things in readiness for her to set off within an hour with me for town. Go, and make haste, as you value my favor."

"Jenkinson," said the duchess coolly; "as you value *my* favor, do not presume to stir one step in this business. Your lady shall *not* return to town with the duke.

Jenkinson courtesied and hesitated in irresolution.

"Begone, and obey me instantly," vociferated the duke, stamping with uncontrolled passion, "or, by heavens, you shall repent."

"I absolutely forbid your quitting this room till you have my permission," interrupted the duchess, impe-

ratively; “as it was in compliance with his grace’s pleasure that you have intruded on our *matrimonial contest*, I inform you that it is now become *mine* that you stay and witness its termination. And now, my lord, I seriously admonish you not to push matters to extremities: you will repent it if you do!---Say, before Jenkinson, that you are sorry for the strutting airs you have been giving yourself---that you promise you will not again attempt to interfere with my views and plans for Xerena---that you consent____”

“Never, madam,” impatiently interrupted the duke, “never, by my soul, will I relinquish the right which nature has given me over her.”

“Will you presume to assert *your* right to be superior to *mine?*” demanded the duchess, scornfully.

“I will do more, madam;” the duke

replied, "I will make you *feel* that it is so. A father's claims over his child——."

"Nay, you must seek some *juster* claim," retorted her grace, with malicious triumph, "for, by my life, and in the face of heaven and earth, I swear *you* are not the father of Xerena! Oh! I have struck you home, have I?"

"Why, this is well!---why this is blow for blow!---Where are you?---Crown me, shadow me with laurels, ye spirits which delight in just revenge!"

"And now, my good Lord of Castleossory, I take my leave, congratulating you on your late fortunate *recovery of your senses*, which may be useful to you in this unforeseen and critical dilemma."

As her grace uttered these words, she flung out of the apartment with an air of insolent malice, followed by the terrified and weeping Jenkinson.

CHAP. IX.

FROM her own chamber the duchess dispatched a message to Mr. Westerly, requesting he would immediately go to the duke, who wanted his services in her dressing-room ; and to her company she sent an excuse for not dining with them.

His grace was found by Mr. Westerly in a condition which much alarmed him : speechless, and so stunned by the severe shock he had just received, that it was some time before he could make known his misfortune to that gentleman. When he did, it was with a feeling bordering on agony, at the idea that the only one of her grace's children whom he had truly and

tenderly loved---the only one whom he believed deserving of his affection, or attached to himself, should prove to be the pledge of his dishonor; a living proof that the tormenting jealousy he had, during the year before Lady Xerena's birth, suffered from her mother's extreme intimacy and marked partiality for Major Coventry had been but too well founded.

While this distressed nobleman was endeavouring to relate the particulars of the late scene to his attentive auditor, a thousand taunts and sneers which that gentleman had himself seen her grace level at the unconscious duke whenever she witnessed any instance of his fondness for Lady Xerena, crowded on his memory, and corroborated the truth of the duchess's assertions.

Yet, many motives (all of them purely selfish ones) induced him to

assure his patron that he felt the most perfect conviction that the whole affair would be found to be nothing more than an idle fabrication of his cousin's, invented at the moment, merely for the purpose of alarming and vexing him.

These declarations he so often and so confidently repeated to the distressed duke, that at length that nobleman thankfully accepted his offer of conferring with his cousin (whose singular character he said he perfectly understood) and of acquainting him with the result before any steps were taken in so delicate and difficult a case.

Mr. Westerly, on obtaining admission to a conference with the duchess, believed he had conquered the most formidable difficulty which he had to encounter in bringing her to a sense of the madness of persisting to maintain a fact so unsuspected and dis-

graceful---a fact, the establishment of which must prove as injurious to Lady Xerena as ruinous to herself.

He had, however, gone too far in asserting that he perfectly understood the extraordinary character of her grace. That lady listened with calm composure to all he had to urge by way of proving that not a moment was to be lost in unsaying all that she had rashly and imprudently affirmed that morning to the duke.

To this her grace very collectedly replied, that with all her faults, (and she was ready to admit she had her share) her dislike was so great to pre-meditated *lying*, that no earthly consideration should ever induce her to contradict what she had, with perfect truth, asserted. She then repeated to Mr. Westerly, with the most solemn asseveration, that the duke was not Lady Xerena's father, and that so de-

terminated was she in the course she meant to pursue in the affair, now that his grace had irritated her into publishing the circumstance, that by way of bringing matters to a crisis as expeditiously as possible, she had ordered Jenkinson to repeat in the servants hall the scene to which she had been a witness; so that long before the moment she was addressing him, there could be no doubt that every individual at the lodge was in possession of that *denouement* of the *melo-drame* which, on the arrival of the duke and Lord Astenhall, she had promised them in lieu of the expected tragedy.

The lady, who continued to listen to all he had further to urge with perfect patience; when he had done, thanked him for what she called a well-meant zeal in a hopeless case, but alleged that she had too long accustomed herself to set the over scrupulous part

of the world at defiance, to trouble herself much about the consequences he seemed to apprehend, and that having herself made up her mind to reject all advice, she begged he would, in future, reserve what he had to bestow for the duke, whose perplexed situation might probably render him grateful for it.

It was to a situation of cruel perplexity, indeed, that that nobleman was reduced by the report of Mr. Westerly, who had found him in earnest conversation with Lord Astenhall.

The strange rumour which had been sent into circulation by Jenkinson had run like wild-fire through the mansion, and soon made its way to his lordship, who, when it reached him, was impatiently waiting the result of the matrimonial conference between his illustrious hosts.

In extreme consternation he sought

out the duke, and was listening to the hopes Mr. Westerly had awakened since the duchess's departure of the whole being a mere trick for the purpose of thwarting him, when that gentleman returned to assure them that he could no longer doubt the fact of her grace's criminality.

Lord Astenhall, shocked and disappointed as he felt, was still sufficiently collected to reflect that the case was now greatly changed in respect to the eligibility of completing his projected marriage. The person of Lady Xerena he preferred to that of any female he had ever seen; but he had *fallen in love* with her as the daughter of the Duke of Castle-ossory, and the inheritor of one half of the large portion settled on the younger children of their grace's marriage. So circumstanced, he undoubtedly preferred her above her whole sex; but he was not quite

so sure, that as the spurious offspring of the duchess, disowned by the duke and his whole family, he should be as desirous of making her his wife. Till he had taken due time to weigh this matter, therefore, his lordship thought he could not be too careful in avoiding, through any inadvertence, to commit himself.

In pursuance of this plan of prudence, he told the duke, that under the distressing embarrassments of his domestic situation, he felt himself called on, for the present, to suspend the arrangements which, under happier circumstances, he should have been most eager to push forward; then adding that he would do himself the honor of calling on his grace soon after his return to Berkeley Square, he took a precipitate leave of him, and summoning his servants, set off for town, where he determined to dedicate some

of his first hours to the revolving his future conduct.

Snap-dragon Lodge became, in the mean time, a scene of increasing confusion. Some of the guests, scandalized at the effrontery of the duchess, took a less ceremonious leave than Lord Astenhall had done; others remained behind, from curiosity, to see how so surprising and unexpected an opening would terminate; while a third description were suspended in painful irresolution, neither making any effort to go, nor reconciling themselves to stay, equally fearful lest their own reputation might be compromised by continuing the inmates of a lady, who had wantonly exposed her own to censure, and reluctant to forfeit all chance of her grace's future favor by abandoning her at such a juncture, supposing a reconciliation should ultimately take place between herself and

the duke, or the affair turn out to be no more than one of those starts of extravagance for which she had been so long celebrated.

While the mansion was thus thrown into hurry and confusion, and the dreadfully irritated duke was urging Mr. Westerly to hasten the carriage in which he was impatient to be born from a spot now become ten-fold hateful to him, the unsuspecting subject of this domestic uproar was returning, full of happiness, from a walk she had been taking with her lover as far as the abode of the young pedlar, whose simple story and affecting meekness had so sensibly touched them both at an early period of their acquaintance.

By the subsequent exertions of Orlando the father had been liberated from confinement, and placed in a temporary abode in the vicinity of the lodge for the recovery of his impaired

health. On his re-establishment he had undertaken so far to interest his family in the unfortunate man's behalf, as to insure their placing him in some situation where he might be enabled to earn for himself, in future, an honest livelihood.

With all the finer feelings, roused by a scene of joy and gratitude to which they had been lately witnesses, on the part of the young pedlar and her reviving father---with bosoms glowing with benevolence for all mankind, and enthusiastic affection towards each other, lady Xerena and Orlando together entered the lodge, looking forward to a life of felicity in which they should, hand in hand, enjoy the delightful pleasure resulting to minds like theirs, from exercising the god-like power of raising from misery to comfort the drooping and afflicted.

An air of extraordinary bustle and

confusion in the mansion made them inquire what was the matter, while the hesitation and embarrassment of those to whom they addressed themselves still more powerfully excited their surprise and anxiety. At length, lady Xerena heard one of the domestics say, "Sampson, inform my lord duke that his carriage is in waiting."

"Sampson," cried Lady Xerena, eagerly following him, "is my father here?"

Sampson bowed and muttered something of his grace being unwell, and very impatient to get back to town.

"Unwell!" echoed the alarmed lady Xerena, increasing her speed, "where is he?---pray, good Sampson, do not keep me in suspense: where is my father?"

"Bless your ladyship, do not go to my lord duke just now; indeed, my lady, you had better not; for God's

sake, condescend to be advised," said the man, respectfully placing himself between lady Xerena and the door, in the hope of checking her entrance.

Her ladyship, now dreadfully frightened, stopped, and Sampson believing his entreaties had prevailed, opened the door, and announced that every thing was ready.

At that moment, the figure of the duke, pallid, feeble, and supported by the arm of Westerly, caught the impatient glance of lady Xerena, when, darting forward like lightning, she was in the next instant, at the elbow of his grace, and snatching the hand which hung beside him, she eagerly carried it to her lips, as she exclaimed with united terror and affection, "My dear father, you are indeed ill! Good God! what is the matter with you, my dear father?"—

All this had been so completely tho-

action of a moment, that it had been impossible for the duke, to avoid a meeting particularly distressing, while suffering under the influence of his present poignant feelings; but quickly recovering through desperation, the energy which had before deserted him, he pushed lady Xerena from him with a look of horror---then rushing from the apartment, he entered his carriage, attended by Mr. Westerly, and they together followed the tract of lord Astenhall to town.

In the mean time, Orlando, who had been encountered by Jenkinson in the hall, immediately after lady Xerena left him, had been informed by her of the dreadful scene to which she had been that morning a witness, and the consequences it had already produced at the lodge.

While, with astonishment and agitation, he was attending to her details,

the duke had brushed by them with an air of frenzy, and Mr. Westerly, who was pursuing him, said in a low voice, as he passed them; “ poor lady Xerena is in the duchess’s dressing room, you had better go to her immediately.”

They found her ladyship extended nearly lifeless on the floor, where the rough push of the duke, taking her entirely unprepared, had thrown her.

More stunned by a reception, so unlike any she had ever before experienced from his grace, (who had been wont to meet her with smiles and caresses) than by the blow she had received in falling; it was a considerable time after Orlando and Jenkinson had raised and sprinkled water on her face, that she began to recover her presence of mind, and to give way to the passionate grief which assailed her, as the look and action of the duke returned on her memory in harrowing exactness.

Orlando dismissed Jenkinson as soon as he perceived that her lady no longer stood in need of her assistance, and was meditating in what way he could best soften the shock which awaited lady Xerena, in a history she must soon inevitably learn, when they were joined by lady Apolonia, bathed in tears, and sobbing most piteously.

She said she was come to ask the advice of her cousin Altringham as to what she had better do, or where she had better go; that her mamma had cruelly locked herself into her chamber, and refused to admit any living creature; that the few persons who were still at the lodge, were whispering and consulting together, so that she found herself quite an intruder amongst them; that her papa, lord Astenhall, and Mr. Westerly, were all gone off for town, and now she had no one left to advise her but himself.

Lady Apolonia then proceeded to state that Flora had assured her every one of the servants thought that her papa would divorce her mamma, and then what was to become of her? Flora, she observed, had said that her papa would never allow her to live with her mamma, after he had proved in open court that her sister was not his daughter. This, she remarked, made her much worse off than lady Xerena, because she never could be happy to live with any one but her mamma till she had an establishment of her own.

After a renewed fit of weeping, her ladyship proceeded to lament the extreme ill luck of her mamma's having been put into such a passion by her papa, otherwise, (she said) no one needed to have been a bit the wiser for this provoking affair; for if her papa had never found out of himself,

in so many years, that her sister was not his daughter, it was not likely he ever would have done it if he had not been told of it.

Her ladyship was at this point of her complaints prevented from relapsing into another display of sorrow by having her attention called off to a new object. She perceived a carriage, well attended, driving towards the lodge; and in the hope that it might contain some new listener to her afflictions, she hurried from the dressing-room, leaving lady Xerena half dead with shame, grief, and horror.

Orlando, after by degrees making her acquainted with the leading circumstances which had come to light, exerted all the passionate tenderness which extreme pity for the object of his affection could inspire, to soothe and reconcile her to an event of which she was herself so entirely innocent.

He declared, that when he considered it as the means of removing at once all those wordly considerations which he had long feared must for ever separate them, except as her delicacy and filial affection were wounded by it, he rather regarded it as a subject for rejoicing than regret.

Lady Xerena, after a burst of agonizing grief, affectingly deplored the certainty that for ever were now separated between herself and him---whom she had, from the first dawn of reason, loved as the most kind and indulgent of parents---

“The offices of nature—bond of childhood—
Effects of courtesy—dues of gratitude.”

That herself, whom the duke had most loved, “and thought to set his rest on her kind nursery,” must in future be regarded as an object abhorrent to his sight.

Orlando with eager warmth replied, that should she be thus rejected by the family of Castle-ossory, it would be only to find herself received into that of Altringham with ten-fold kindness. That never had she been so dear to his heart as at that moment; and if to find in him the most attached of husbands, in the venerable Lady Fitz-osborne and his own indulgent parents, hers, in sharing henceforth with him the fraternal affections of his brothers, (which had, before he knew her, formed one of his greatest sources of pleasure) and the friendship of Lady Ismena Altringham, the bride of Mortimer, could compensate her for the privations she apprehended, he yet hoped to experience that dearest of all joys, the seeing her leading a future life of happiness.

Orlando was continuing to pour forth the affectionate sentiments with

which his bosom was overcharged, in the hope of in some measure soothing the poignant distress of the lovely object of his interest, when a sight equally unexpected and pleasingly opportune saluted him. The door opened, and Lady Ismena, who had not long before become a member of his family, entered the apartment.

It was Mr. Altringham's carriage that had attracted the attention of Lady Apolonia, in its approach to the mansion, and was found by her to contain the young couple and Lady Fitzosborne, who had accompanied them to town on their marriage.

In the metropolis they had lately seen Major Daventry, whose present ruling passion happening to be the stage, he had literally persecuted them into consenting to witness his *debut* at the duchess's private theatre in the part of Mercutio.

Thus had they been drawn to Snap-dragon Lodge, little anticipating the *melo-drame* by which her grace had superseded the expected tragedy, or that they should find Orlando there, whom they had all believed to be diligently pursuing his studies at Cambridge.

The result of Lady Apolonia's communication of all that had happened, was her venerable aunt's immediately requesting and obtaining admission to a conference with the duchess.

It was during her absence on this occasion, and while Mortimer was engaged in endeavouring to reason his silly cousin into greater self-command, that Lady Ismena, impatient to see her favorite Orlando, (the before unaccountable cause of whose having declined to join his family on her marriage she had how divined) explored her way to the apartment in which she

found him, vainly endeavouring to sooth the distressed object of his interest.

Orlando hailed Lady Ismena as an angel of comfort, and received her with that heart-felt welcome which their early friendship, and the newly formed tie which united her to his brother equally inspired. Knowing and esteeming her as he did, she was the being of all others, Lady Fitzosborne excepted, (and of her arrival he was not yet apprised) to whose generous and delicate attentions he would, at such a moment, have consigned the deeply afflicted Lady Xerena; and never had his admiration of her noble nature been raised to so high a pitch of enthusiasm as by her conduct on this occasion.

Whenever Lady Ismena condescended to *court* confidence and affection, she had been found irresistible.

by those who were not absolutely destitute of heart; and now, stimulated by so many motives of friendship---of benevolence--of the enlarged desire of rendering others happy, as she was herself---a young creature, constituted like Lady Xerena, could not long withstand her fascinating powers---could not remain entirely insensible to the consoling prospect of acquiring such a friend---of finding herself graciously received into a family, amiable as was that of Altringham, and of which her ladyship formed so distinguished a member, by a bond of union sanctioned by her best affections.

Still these opening views were from time to time dreadfully clouded by the chilling recollections of the duke, whom she had ever loved---whom she still loved with all a daughter's affections---The look of horror with

which he threw her from him---the certainty that she never more could be to him otherwise than a source of shame and grief, came over her heart with an almost insupportable weight of sorrow.

In this state of fluctuation, between hopes of future peace, and an acute sense of her present forlorn situation, she was joined by Lady Fitzosborne, who met her as the decided and favored choice of her Orlando; for the particulars she had learnt from the duchess of their attachment had determined her conduct.

That excellent lady acquainted her young auditors that it was the wish of her grace (who for the present declined seeing either of her daughters) that Lady Xerena should accompany her that very afternoon towards the Join-ture-house, whither it had been her own previous intention to repair on

Mortimer and Lady Ismena's return to town.

Every one was struck with the propriety and considerate kindness of this measure, which would at once remove Lady Xerena from a residence, (that in the present posture of affairs must prove to her one of mortification and bitterness) without incurring the risk of throwing her in the way of the irritated duke.

While lady Xerena, at her own earnest desire, was left alone for a short time to collect and endeavour to compose her cruelly agitated spirits before her departure, Mortimer and Lady Ismena gave Orlando their united assurances that they would add their zealous exertions to those of Lady Fitzosborne for removing any obstacles which might spring up to impede their union.

It was finally settled that Orlando should accompany them to the Join-

ture-house, and after passing a few days at Altringham Castle, for the purpose of obtaining the concurrence of his parents in the measures they were solicitous to adopt for him, that he should return to college, leaving to Lady Fitzosborne the protection of her whom he soon hoped to take under his own.

These plans were carried into execution. The indulgent Sir Godfrey, far from opposing the wishes of his son, promised that, by the period at which he was to take his degrees, he would, in concert with his mother, make such arrangements as to pave the way for his marriage immediately following that event.

CHAP. X.

THE intervening period between the Duke of Castle-ossory's last departure from Snap-dragon Lodge, and that at which Orlando Altringham finally quitted Cambridge as a place of residence, was passed by that nobleman in a state of constant agitation.

His extreme rage at the effrontery of the duchess, and the public exposure of his own personal dishonor urged him to try, by every possible means, to establish such facts as might enable him to obtain a divorce, without relinquishing the larger part of her fortune.

For this purpose, all those domestics who had resided in his family at

the period of Major Coventry's intimacy with her grace were diligently sought out and examined, but in vain. Either the lady had suborned them to secrecy, or had been too guarded to commit herself to their observations.

One servant alone, and that the most suspicious, was no where to be found. — La Babiole, who had been the duchess's favorite woman ever since the first year of her marriage, had been unaccountably spirited away from the lodge the evening of her grace's daring avowal. *She* then, no doubt, was the trusty confidant---*she* was the witness who, if once produced and closely cross-examined, must substantiate such facts as would clearly prove the lady's infidelity; but where was she to be met with.

Emissaries were dispatched in every direction, with offers of immense rewards if they could discover the hiding

place of this culprit, in whose flight very strong evidence of conscious guilt was fairly to be presumed.

No traces, however, of La Babiole had been yet discovered, though a considerable time had been lost in the search, when the duke was one morning surprised by a letter from the author of his anxiety---the hopeful duchess!

This letter informed him that all chance of arriving at the truth, except through herself, was hopeless. Her grace, requested, however, that he would not afflict himself at this intelligence, since she was perfectly ready, for his edification, to make such confessions as would, in future, save him all unnecessary search; but then it must be on her own terms.

These terms were that the duke should meet her at the mansion of Lady Fitzosborne Altringham, in

whose presence, and that of her family only, she would ever more, she said, enter on the subject in question. Her grace further observed, that the duke was at liberty to bring with him any witness he pleased, and she would answer him or them (on oath if he required it) whatever queries they might be desirous of putting to her.

The consequence of this singular proposition was a resolution on the part of the duke to meet her grace, accompanied by a friend, at the time and place appointed, which determination was in due form transmitted to the lady.

Lady Xerena, in the meantime, was gradually reviving under the kind and genial attentions she was receiving from her excellent hostess and all those members of her family who were near her.

Never having been, like her sister

Apolonia, the pampered child of indulgence, and for a very short period of her life having tasted unalloyed happiness, it naturally followed that the new pleasure of finding herself loved, appreciated, caressed by a family which was in future to become hers, one, too, whose minds and pursuits were so in unison with her own, must have more than compensated to her for every loss, except that of the duke's affection; but of him she could not yet think or speak without tears of fond regret and tenderness. Little did she anticipate the shock to which the duchess was about soon to expose her by unexpectedly introducing him at the Jointure-house, or the terrible and public confession to which she had on that occasion pledged herself.

Mr. Altringham and Lady Ismena had been for some time returned to fix their principal residence at the priory.

The actual marriage of Cecil had been announced by letter to his father, and he was himself and bride very shortly expected in England, when the day was fixed on which Orlando was to receive the hand of Lady Xerena.

The duchess had been previously consulted by Lady Fitzosborne, who signified in reply that she would make a point of being present at the ceremony at the time nominated; but she did not hint that she had selected that very occasion to meet the enraged duke in the presence of the assembled family of Altringham.

The day at length arrived: Orlando and Lady Xerena, surrounded by Lady Fitzosborne, Sir Godfrey and Lady Altringham, Mortimer and Lady Ismena, Mrs. Dorville, and the clergyman, who was to officiate at the ceremony, had been for some time awaiting, in a kind of awful suspense the arrival of

the duchess, when her coach drove up to the door of the Jointure-house, and immediately stepped from it herself, Lady Apolonia, Mr. Westerly, and the long lost La Babiole !

In her grace's meeting with Lady Xerena, she appeared to have lost none of that *self-possession* which had never been known to abandon her but on one occasion since her marriage : that occasion was her meeting with St. Ormond.

She now, after a moment's pause, during which she threw a quick glance round the circle, said, " I do not yet perceive amongst you him who is to act the part of nominal father to the bride."

" That is an office which I have looked forward with much pleasure to perform myself," replied the kind-hearted Sir Godfrey, casting a look of pity at the distressed Lady Xerena,

who appeared shocked by an observation which forced on her memory so many subjects of deep regret.

"I am infinitely beholden to you, my good Sir, for your readiness to oblige me," observed her grace, "but there is only one person whom I can possibly allow to officiate in that capacity; and I am rather surprised at not seeing him already here."

"Whom can you mean?" asked every one in the same moment, alarmed without exactly knowing why, at a certain daringness conspicuous in the expression of her grace's countenance.

"I mean no other than my good lord Duke of Castle-ossory!" replied the lady calmly, "and here he comes, if I mistake not---yes, that is his carriage."

"Oh, madam, for shame!" exclaimed the indignant Lady Fitzosborne, as soon as Lady Ismena and Mrs. Derville had led out the nearly

fainting object of her cruelty ; “ what inexcusable mockery is this !---what unheard of outrage to every sense of humanity---of propriety---of——.”

“ Pardon me, most respected Lady Fitzosborne,” interrupted the duchess, assuming an air of contrition, “ bear with my perverseness in this one instance, but this one, and I solemnly promise you that it is the last act of tyranny which the duke shall ever experience from me. I cannot---*will* not recede from my intention,” added she firmly, “ and you would afterwards repent it, should you attempt to overrule me.”

While every one present was turning from her grace, with a feeling, nearly amounting to horror, the door was thrown open, and the agitated duke, leaning for support on the arm of lord Astenhall, entered the apartment.

Lady Fitzosborne, Sir Godfrey, and

Mortimer, immediately stepped forward to meet them, while the duchess seemed to stand aloof, as in the act of collecting herself for some very extraordinary proceeding.

At length, addressing his grace with an air of courtesy, she said. " My lord, I thank you for your punctuality, you shall find me not less ready to perform my part of the engagement." Then ringing the bell, she requested the favor of Lady Ismena and Orlando's company, who leaving the somewhat revived Lady Xerena under the care of Mrs. Dorville, obeyed the summons, impatient to put an end to so ill-timed, and cruel a delay: for that the duchess really meditated the making so preposterous a proposal to the duke, as that she had mentioned, they utterly disbelieved---though they were unable to guess for what purpose she had drawn him hither.

" My lord,"---said her grace, with unusual solemnity, as soon as they had joined her. " My lord, I think it necessary once more to repeat before your grace, and these your honorable relatives, that Xerena is *not your child.*"

" No more of that, madam," cried the duke, in a voice almost choaked with impatience.---" No more of that, but to your promise."

" Then in the face of heaven, and of this honored circle," pursued the duchess with increasing earnestness, " I swear that as Xerena is *not your child*, my lord, so neither is she mine."

Doubt, confusion, and amazement, sat on every countenance, and kept each listener silent and attentive, while her grace proceeded :

" I do not mean now, my lord, to renew my reproaches for what has been long since passed; yet, in my

own defence, I must remark that the discovery of *your* connivance in the artifice which separated me from St. Ormond, called into vigorous life two embryo faults in my character, whose seeds had been implanted there almost in the age of infancy. I mean *the spirit of retaliation, and love of insulting triumph.*"

"Perhaps there are few propensities more pregnant with complicated mischief, than this last! How often does the dread of encountering its humiliating taunts, force those, who have not the fortitude to support its intolerable insults, rather to persist in conscious error, than, by turning back to face so merciless, so ungenerous, and let me add, so *unchristian like* an enemy!

"You well know, my lord, how early I made you smart under its lash, yet, to say the truth, the fear I even at those times suffered least I might

some day, inadvertently, lay myself open to your reprisals, in some measure revenged you ; for, in proportion to the delight I took in exulting over you, the thought of ever becoming in my turn the object of your triumph, was insupportable to me.

" It was the spirit of retaliation, (for at that time the wrongs of St. Ormond were rankling at my heart) that induced me from the moment I discovered you could be made uneasy by it, to encourage the fooleries of Coventry; but he was a coxcomb whom I secretly despised. The same feeling urged me to circumvent you in your desired purchase of the lodge, and the after discovery that the *law* might probably wrest it from me, and ensure *your triumph*, by giving it to you, suggested the expedient to which I successfully resorted as a means of diverting you from pursuing its course.

"And now I come to that part of my history, which proves, that in the love of tormenting, as in many other intended injuries to others, it often happens, that,

—“Even handed justice,
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd
chalice,
To our own lips.”

“The intemperate pleasure I experienced in witnessing the alarm and vexation your grace felt at my prosecuting so rapidly, my mad journey into Spain, made me in a great measure lose sight of the risk of defeating by it, the very object, which had at such a time, carried me out of my own country.”

“To say the truth, I was never seriously roused to a sense of my folly, till my *comádre** announced to me on the birth of my child, that it must

... * Nurse.

have been for some time dead. Then the lodge, and your grace's *triumph*, and the general laugh which would be raised against me, by those before whom I had carried it with so high a hand, and the shabby figure I should make on my return to England, came before me in terrible array! I scolded and fretted and offered half I was worth to the good creature, if she could perform impossibilities, by awakening the dead. This set her to moralizing, and to weeping, and to declaring, that, but for the certainty, that in this best of all possible worlds, whatever is is best, she should be tempted to say, that had the unfortunate babe intrusted to her care died instead of mine, it would have been well for both. She then told me a long dismal story, concluding with the declaration that innocent as the babe was, it was beset by

enemies, from whom she had no power to save it.

" While the *comádre* was easing her own heart by prosing, a thought suddenly flashed across my mind.---What should prevent my saving it---and with it my lodge---and a thousand other desirable etceteras ?

" To be brief, the gossip worshiped me as the immediate instrument of providence, on my offering, for the present, to adopt the urchin; and under favor of the night, before any of my people joined me, the exchange was effected. You, my lord, found with me the next morning a fine healthy girl; and my poor infant was by the obliging *comádre*, consigned to its early grave.

" During the time this good creature afterwards attended me at my miserable *posada*, it was agreed between us, that she should make known

to Xerena's relations, to whom she had confided her. I furnished her with my address, as she did me with the names of the persons in question; and we parted under the belief on my part, that they would soon reclaim their property; when I thought it would be no difficult matter to frame some device for allowing your grace, who never cared for either of your children, to believe the babe had died a natural death.

" But I have found to my cost, that my inventive genius has never been put to this exertion! The girl has been fairly left on my hands for my punishment; and although I have in various ways, and at sundry times, made every possible enquiry after these aforesaid relatives, I have never from that moment to the present, been able to gain any information respecting them, or my Spanish nurse. Whether,

therefore, or not, she was an artful impostor, and her pathetic story a mere fabrication to rid herself of an incumbrance, I cannot tell, but this I can truly assert, that your grace soon began (though very innocently) to make me repent of what I had done.

“ The fondness you most provokingly conceived for the young urchin, enraged me; and when, after our return to England, I saw that you persevered in nourishing it, to the exclusion nearly of *my* children---I was driven, in mere spite, to commit a thousand extravagancies.

“ Yet this was but the beginning of my torment---the girl, maugre many disadvantages, grew up beautiful and fascinating; and to crown my vexation, fascinated (without wishing it, mark me) my lord Astenhall---whom I so much esteemed, that---but no matter---

“ Well, I became more and more

perplexed what to do with this Xerena, who, from many little winning ways (particularly during my illness) in spite of myself, created something very like affection in me. I therefore hailed with infinite satisfaction, the partiality I soon discovered springing up between Orlando Altringham and herself; and I resolved to make such a provision for them, as would at once satisfy his family, and ensure to the lovers every thing which minds so happily moderated could desire.

“ His grace’s interference with my intentions, exasperated me into checking him by a shock---which has more than revenged all his misdemeanors towards me---yet,” added the duchess, with an appealing look round the circle of her auditors. “ Was it to be expected that a nature spoilt as mine has been by indulgence, could endure seeing the duke in his over zeal to se-

cure a certain young nobleman as his son-in-law, taking the very road to unite him to an alien!"

During the pause of silence which followed her grace's interrogatory, the sound of carriage wheels was heard--- and the face of Cecil Altringham, looking eagerly from the chariot windows, was recognized with general joy.

In the next minute, he entered the saloon, leading by the hand, his interesting and lovely Azora, and followed by a respectable but infirm old woman.

As soon as the first ebullition of general delight had in some measure subsided, turning towards the venerable stranger, he said:

" My good friend, I did not suspect that I should so soon be able to perform my engagement to you, but in this very room you may discover the object of your search."

The aged female, now surveying the

party with an air of scrutinizing earnestness, at length fixed her whole attention on the countenance of the duchess, then addressing her in the Spanish tongue, she asked if she did not see in her the lady whom she had eighteen years before nursed at a certain *posada* in Spain.

"Good heavens!" cried her grace, contemplating the old woman with eager astonishment, "it is my Spanish *comadre* whom I behold!"

"And your's is the voice, Senora, of the Marchioness of Cinquefoil!---your's are her eyes---yes, Senora, you are the distressed traveller whose sudden indisposition drew me to your assistance: it was to your charge I entrusted the infant, Donna Xerena."

"You did, my good creature," cried the duchess, in a tone expressive of the joy she felt at so unexpected and fortunate a witness to corroborate

her details) "you did, and she still lives, is under this roof; but where are her parents?"

"Alas! Senora, in the grave."

These words were pronounced with a solemnity and regret which, for some minutes, kept every one silent. The pause was at length broken by Cecil, who in a faltering and subdued voice informed his friends that those parents had been the unfortunate Don Juan Silveira D'Iriarte, and Donna Ilerena, his wife!---That this ill-starred pair, in their precipitate flight from Spain, had left their infant, Xerena, behind with Leonarda, who, from increasing terror, lest it should be torn from her by the power of the inquisition, and offered up as a sacrifice for the offences of its parents, had caught, with gratitude, at the Marchioness of Cinquefoil's proposal, as a means of eluding the search she had believed to be at

that moment diligently making for it ; that the long concealment of the circumstance had originated in Leonarda's having been taken up soon after her grace's departure under the authority of the law ; not as had been imagined by her friends, as the abettor of Ilerena's flight, but on the false accusation of her having been the receiver of some valuable articles which had been stolen from a family of consideration in Madrid. The real culprit had absconded, and had been traced by the officers of justice to the vicinity of the abode in which she was awaiting some tidings of the fugitives. The terror Leonarda had exhibited at sight of the emissaries of the holy brotherhood, with her refusal to give the account of herself which they demanded (from which she was withheld by a fear of endangering her lady) had appeared sufficient evidence of her guilt, to

-justify her apprehension and imprisonment. The real offender had been afterwards taken, convicted, and had suffered death at an *Auto-de-fe*, before the return of St. Ormond, while the unhappy Leonarda, for want of some powerful friend to effect her deliverance, had been suffered to languish forgotten in the dungeon to which she had been consigned. The studious mystery ever thrown over the proceedings of the inquisition had deceived St. Ormond on his return in search of Leonarda, into the firm belief of the report which had greeted him on his arrival, that the infant of Illerena, which had been mistaken for that of the Marchioness, was dead, and that its nurse had suffered under the sentence of the law. These melancholy tidings he had transmitted to Don Juan.

Eighteen years after, providence had guided the steps of St. Ormond to the

prison in which Leonarda still existed. The misery of her condition excited his compassion, and the account she gave of herself in answer to his enquiries led to the discoveries which afterwards followed.

D'Iriarte died in the belief that Azora had a sister, whom he solemnly enjoined her to find out, and in the possibility that Xerena still lived, he equally devised, by will, the produce of his property between them.

In the progress of these details, the surprised Mortimer discovered that the Donna Celerica who had played a conspicuous part in the late misfortunes of his brother, and the *Acidalia* who had once so nearly destroyed his own happiness, were one and the same. He learnt also, that it was Cecil's having accidentally met amongst her books with a marginal note (written by himself on his own translation of Crantor,

during his infatuated attachment to her) which had led him to the discovery of this unsuspected fact. Yet could not either brother comprehend the motive that had actuated her conduct towards Cecil, which was that of malice against Lady Fitzosborne, to whose supposed interference she had always attributed her loss of Mortimer. In the hope of vexing that venerable lady, she had been induced to lure Cecil within the vortex of her pleasures, believing that the knowledge of the idle effeminacy of his life, would grieve her who took so lively an interest in all her grandsons.

Such were the particulars which were developed by Cecil and Leonarda, many of which corroborated to the entire satisfaction of every one the previous narrative of the duchess; and the memorandum she produced, which had been given her eighteen years

before, by Leonarda, at their separation.

"And now, my lord duke," said her grace, with an air and tone more gracious than she had ever before descended to bestow on him, "what can I further say? That I have been much to blame, I do not deny. If your conscience tells you that *I* alone have been so, you are at liberty to refuse the promise I demand---It is oblivion for the past."

"Madam," replied his grace, accepting her offered hand, "I have no difficulty in stating, that so perfect is the satisfaction with which I learn that my honor is unsullied, untarnished, and without blemish, that I am entirely disposed to accept your proposition without hesitation or reserve."

"In proof, whereof," returned the duchess, (resolutely suppressing the arch smile which would relax her fea-

tures at the recollection of many instances in which he had himself shewn so little respect for it) “in proof whereof, my lord, you will oblige me by conferring the hand of Xerena on the amiable, the disinterested, the noble-minded Orlando.”

The duke of Castle-ossory felt himself relieved from a state of confusion, perplexity, and doubt, truly pitiable by the recent disclosure of his extraordinary duchess. Confusion at his inability to revenge on her his supposed injuries---perplexity as to the best means to be devised in order to effect it, and doubt whether he might not, in the end, regret his divorce, (supposing he should ultimately procure one) from being compelled to give back a considerable portion of her grace’s fortune. A most unexpected and opportune discovery had, in the very crisis of his distractions, at once

relieved him from these troublesome mental companions ; and he now almost immediately forgot, in the delight of feeling himself once more relieved from them, his real cause of indignation against the duchess, who had so unmercifully tormented him.

Yet, by nature narrow, and incorrigibly selfish, on finding the cause of horror with which he had repulsed Lady Xerena removed, he could never again open his heart to the paternal affection she had once excited in him, and of which she had never been more eminently deserving. The tender marks of filial affection, therefore, with which she met him, now possessed no power to touch his bosom. Unable to regard her as *his* daughter, as one who bore a resemblance to *himself*, he received her with coldness, and parted from her with indifference. He nevertheless first performed the part as-

signed him, by the duchess, at the marriage ceremony, and Orlando actually received his bride from the duke's own hand.

Soon after the performance of these rites, her grace attended by her whole party, made a precipitate retreat from the Jointure House, on learning from Cecil that he was in hourly expectation of the arrival of St. Ormond, under whose care Belario had been left.

With all her grace's effrontery, she shrank from encountering the well remembered eye of her former lover, and first became sensible of shame at the part she had acted, by considering the additionally unfavorable opinion, the knowledge of it was calculated to excite of her, in a man, who had once so ardently desired to unite his fate with her's.

Agitated and half mad at this re-

flection, the Duchess of Castleossory had hurried from the probability of perceiving in the countenance of St. Ormond, his mortifying self-congratulation, at his happy escape from her thraldom---and with feelings much less agreeable than those of the duke, she accompanied him back to town.

Far different were the future lives of the orphan daughters of D'Iriarte, from those which they had hitherto experienced; nor was the fate of Lady Ismena Altringham, less enviable. United to each other, and to the excellent Lady Fitzosborne, by sympathy of mind, and reciprocal friendship, ingrafted on a family, who loved and appreciated them; all attached to, and creating the charm of the partner of their days---these three charming women experienced a share of happiness, rarely awarded to the inhabitants

of this earth, in their congenial and fortunate union with the Sons of Altringham.

FINIS.











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